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WANG RUOXU (1174-1243) AND HIS CRITICAL ESSAYS IN INTELLECTUAL HISTORY OF JIN DYNASTY (1115-1234)

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SUMMARY

The Jin dynasty established by the Jurchens, and their civilization had been subjects of increasing interest in recent studies on the intellectual history of early modern China. The literary revival in late Jin has become the topic of a series of studies, and Wang Ruoxu, a central figure in this revival, has attracted scholarly attention.

Wang is important to researchers because he is one of the few Jin literati whose literary collections have been preserved. His extant literary collection, consisting of forty-eight *juan* covering Classics studies, history, literary criticism and other occasional writings, provides a valuable source of information which has revealed the multiple facets of the Jin intellectual world. Wang's writings are characterized by a strong sense of criticism. The majority of his collection is constituted by critical essays. Recent research into the reasons behind Wang's writings suggested that he was trying to convey that "Chin literati can have authority over the cultural tradition and critically assess earlier participants in it."[1]

How did he criticize others and engage himself in the cultural tradition? Wang's critical essays provide the foundation for answering this question. In Chinese intellectual history, a readily available means of entering into the intellectual discourse was to write one's own version of commentary. Wang mainly wrote critical essays as supplements to the well-established commentarial corpus. Writing these for particular Classics which

[1] Bol, "Seeking common ground: Han literati under Jurchen rule", *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 47:2 (1987), p. 519.

already had sanctioned commentaries was Wang's way of expression of dissident and represented an inquiry for accessing the authority to interpret the sacred meanings.

This thesis attempts to answer the question by looking into the details of the text of Wang's writings, analyzing his tactics, and trying to understand his position through detailed discussion of his critical works. To do so would help us know what conceptual tools he implemented and how he implemented them in understanding the Classics, and what reading strategies he adopted and how he adopted them in reading the sacred texts and others' commentaries. Understanding Wang's scholarly endeavor will be helpful for understanding the intellectual history of Northern China during the Song-Jin-Yuan period.

This research assesses Wang Ruoxu's scholarship and how he engaged himself in the cultural tradition. The first chapter constitutes a literature review of recent development in the field of intellectual history of North China after Northern Song. The second chapter is a microscopic biography of Wang Ruoxu. Chapters three to five constitute the main body of the thesis and examine Wang's three most important concepts in reading and criticizing, i.e. *renqing*, *yi yi ni zhi* and *wenshi yufa*. Chapter six is the conclusion which relates Wang to his social and historical background.

INTRODUCTION

The current project is on a literatus of Jin Dynasty (金, 1115-1234) by the name of Wang Ruoxu (王若虚, 1174-1243), an erudite scholar active in many disciplines and who could be labeled as a critic of historiography, a poet cum literary critic, or a critic of commentaries on Confucian classics. Interestingly, all the labels share the common trait of criticism. It is easy to find in one's collection of writings a piece or two judging and evaluating someone else's thoughts, scholarly work or literary compositions, but it is hard to find a person whose extant collection is almost entirely comprised of critiques like Wang's.

Being well-trained in many disciplines, Wang had special interest in commentaries to Confucian classics, like the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, the *Analects*, *Mencius* and *Book of Rites*, etc. The scholars who were subjected to his judgment and criticism come from a wide spectrum spanning from Han to Southern Song, including the most prominent scholars like Zheng Xuan (鄭玄, 127–200), Cheng Brothers (Cheng Hao, 程顥 , 1032-1085, Cheng Yi, 程頤, 1033-1107), and lesser known scholars whose writings can be found nowhere else except in Wang's quotations.

What makes Wang Ruoxu more interesting is the historical and social setting of the composition of his critical works. They were not written in peaceful times by a well-faring scholar with the aim of enjoying an intellectual challenge. On the contrary, the major part of his collection was believed to have been written in the later part of Jin, a time of warfare, rebellion and social upheaval. The regime of Jin has long been deemed as a dark age of Chinese culture and a barren soil of civilization. Some questions naturally arise. Why did Wang write these works? What sense did his criticism make? How did he criticize others and engage himself in the cultural tradition? Some of these

questions were considered and answered, like the questions of "Why" and "What", by early research. This current project aims to answer the question of "How". Before concentrating our interest on Wang's work, a review of recent literature on Jin and the intellectual world of that time would be useful in paving the road to more detailed discussions.

Recent literature on the intellectual development of Jin before the 1190s

In traditional Chinese historiography, Jin did not receive much attention, not only because it was established by "alien" Jurchen conquerors, but also because its civilization was eclipsed by its southern neighbor Song. In intellectual history, for example, its scholarly enterprise was satirized by compilers of *Song Yuan xue'an* as worthless, [1] and its once highly recognized civil service examination system was forgotten during most time of Ming and Qing.[2] However, since the later part of the last century, many of these stereotypes have changed. Tao Jinsheng's pioneer studies reexamined the Jin and Jurchen people and understood that the institution and bureaucracy of Jin was on par with other authentic Chinese regimes and there were genuine innovations and improvements in administrative infrastructure.[3] Herbert Franke thoroughly reevaluated Jin's scholarship, arts and literature, and recognized their high quality, and he noticed that the historiography of Jin was hampered by the meagerness of artistic productions inherited from Jin, and pointed out that this paucity should be partially attributed to the insouciance of the later generations.[4]

[1] See Quan Zuwang's remarks on Jin intellectuals in Huang Zongxi and Quan Zuwang, *Song Yuan xue'an* (Beijing: Zhongguo shudian, 1990), p. 770.
[2] On negligence of Jin intellectual and Jin civil service examination participants in Ming and Qing, see Xue Ruizhao, *Jindai keju* (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2004), p. 84.
[3] Tao Jinsheng, "Jindai de zhengzhi jiegou", *Zhongyang yanjiu yuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo jikan*, 41:4 (1969), pp. 567-593 ; "Jindai de zhengzhi chong tu", *Zhongyang yanjiu yuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo jikan*, 43:1 (1971), pp. 135-162.
[4] Herbert Franke and Denis Twitchett ed., *Cambridge History of China vol. 6: Alien regimes and border states, 907-1368* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1994) pp. 304-312.

It is evident that, compared to the quality of extant materials of the Southern Song, what was produced by the Jin is less well preserved. The available materials on Jin still, however, provide us with the possibility of tracing its literary and intellectual development. Peter Bol first attempted to illustrate the literary and cultural evolution during Jin. [1] By examining the development of civil service examination and increasing the emphasis given to *wen* by the court, he proposed a "literary revival" during the later part of Jin (the time span is from 1190 to 1234), at which time literati started assuming the responsibility to discover universal value through practicing *wen* with various scholarly and literary means, e.g. prose-writing, poem-composing, drawing and calligraphy so as to access the *dao* which they believed could be approached by literary learning. One indicator of change in Jin literary learning is the position of Su Shi, as noticed in both Hoyt Tillman's and Bol's responses to Yoshigawa's observation, that Su was the spirit of Jin scholars and his influence blinded them to appreciate Zhu Xi's learning. However, Bol saw that for Jin literati Su Shi was after all a literary figure, while Tillman agreed that Jin literati ranked Su Shi rather high for his literature and treatises on politics. In the light of Neo-Confucianism, Jin literati also challenged traditional belief by asking whether Su received or really knew the *dao*.[2]

Although the awareness of the *dao* and the conscious pursuit of it could be interpreted as bequeathed from early Northern Song Neo-Confucian masters, it was most likely the result of the introduction of Southern Song Neo-Confucianism learning to the north in the 1190s, as demonstrated by Tillman and Wei Chongwu independently[3].

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[1] Peter Bol, "Seeking common ground: Han literati under Jurchen Rule." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 47:2 (1987), pp 461-538.

[2] Yoshigawa, "Shushi gaku hokuden zenshi – Kincho to Shushigaku", cited in Bol, "Seeking common ground", p. 468, 469, and in Hoyt Tillman, "Confucianism under the Chin and the Impact of Sung Confucian Tao-hsueh", Hoyt Cleveland Tillman and Stephen H. West (ed.), *China under Jurchen Rule, essays on Chin Intellectual and Cultural History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), pp. 71-114.

[3] Tillman, "Confucianism under the Chin and the impact of Sung Confucian Tao-hsueh", p. 110; Wei Chongwu, "Jindai lixue fazhan chu tan", *Lishi yanjiu*, 3 (2003), p. 31. The concept of "Neo-Confucianism"

Interestingly the years during the introduction of Neo-Confucianism overlapped the time of Bol's "literary revival". This coincidence raised the question of how it was possible that there was a "literary revival" on one hand, while on the other hand there was an observable "decline in quality of literature".[1] This apparent contradiction could be considered as such. The "literary revival" might be understood with two observations: one, the numbers of literary participants had increased, together with the quantity of literary products; and two, the literati attempted to touch higher values via practicing *wen* (The higher values include e.g. being a member and preserver of literary tradition and pursuing the *dao*. These were more or less Jin intellectuals' responses to issues raised by Neo-Confucianism). Hence in the "literary revival" the literature-producing activities were relegated to a secondary level, or the means rather than ends in achieving a kind of higher value, and meaningfulness was now being vested in higher value or the *dao*, rather than in literary work.

The impetus of Jin scholars' quest for *dao* and their indifference to this task in the early years of Jin demand an explanation. Wei, while agreeing with Tillman's timing on the introduction of Southern Song Neo-Confucianism to the north, carefully surveyed the "remnants" of Northern Song Neo-Confucianism in Jin territory. Wei suggested that the reason for the stagnancy of Neo-Confucianism in Jin was that Confucianism-inspired officials, who supported the new ruling house while consolidating their position in politics dominated by Jurchen, had to avail themselves of readily available Han-Tang Classics studies and political theories. They had no reason to resort to the yet under-developed Neo-Confucianism.[2] This is possible since studies on the Han-Tang Classics

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or "*li xue*" used in this thesis is based on Hou Wailu's *Song Ming lixue shi* (A history of Neo-Confucianism in Song and Ming) and Bol's *Neo-Confucianism in History*.

[1] Tian Hao (Tillman, Hoyt), Yu Zhongxian, "Jinchao sixiang yu zhengzhi gai shuo", Ryū Shiken Hakushi Shōju Kinen Sōshi Kenkyū Ronshū Kankōkai (ed.), *Ryū Shiken Hakukshi shōju kinen Sō shi kenkyū ronshū* (Kyoto: Tohosha, 1989), pp. 34, 35.

[2] Wei Chongwu, "Jindai lixue fazhan chu tan", p. 32.

also included political reasoning and political theories like legitimating issues, which were necessary to justify a new regime. The influential officials in charge of the civil service examinations in early Jin weighed much more heavily on the literary component than on more analytical and philosophical flavored Classics studies (經義, *jingyi*), which were abandoned in 1151 and not re-launched until 1188. This did not help in furthering the scholars' knowledge on the more philosophical Neo-Confucianism.[1]

Tillman dated the reemergence of Neo-Confucianism in the north in the 1190s by probing into late Jin scholarship. He concluded that the new trend of discussing Neo-Confucianism from the South won a large following of Jin official-scholars. It is quite evident that leading intellectuals from the late Jin wrote voluminously on Neo-Confucianism.[2]

Despite having a large following among intellectuals, it is impossible to expect the intellectual community to exist as a concert of symphony, but rather it was a compilation of different voices, an intellectual arena where contesting forces coexisted. This can be seen on hindsight with the situation in Northern Song, when there were the Shu (蜀) learning, Luo (洛) learning and Guan (關) learning, which were categorized geographically, and represented the intellectual arena. Besides these, there was Buddhism and Daoism.[3] What they competed for was the entitlement of the "true way" or "true learning". De Bary illustrated their mentality by presenting the Neo-Confucians' (represented by Zhu Xi) insistence on the Neo-Confucianism version of the true way and their principled disputation against "those who pursue utilitarian advantages" and

[1] For a comprehensive survey of the civil service examination in Jin, see Xue Ruizhao, *Jindai keju*; for details on various subjects in the system, see pp. 46-57.
[2] Tillman, "Confucianism under the Chin and the impact of Sung Confucian Tao-hsueh", p. 110.
[3] James Liu, *Ou-yang Hsiu – an eleventh-century Neo-Confucianist* (California: Stanford University Press, 1967) p. 95.

Buddhists.[1] The competition which existed within the Confucian group was quite well covered in studies on the development of Neo-Confucianism in Southern Song.[2] This phenomenon was not unique to Song. In the intellectual arena of late Jin, Tillman noticed the coexistence of competing forces, particularly the Quanzhen Daoism sect, which was singled out by other researchers as a very powerful intellectual trend attracting Jin scholars.[3] Buddhism also aroused great dissidents in the intellectual milieu;[4] there were followers of Su learning and Cheng learning. But in Jin there was no strong sense of monopoly of "way" as the Neo-Confucians in Southern Song had.[5]

It should be noted that, although its contenders were debating over purely intellectual and literary issues, the intellectual arena was not insulated from the external world. It also had to respond to the world at large, to the politics, to the crisis and threat imposed by neighboring countries, especially during the last forty years of Jin, from the 1190s on when the Mongolian threat loomed large. It has been suggested that the internal crisis, together with the Mongol threat, pressed the court to revise its legitimating practice. The majority of those involved in this revision were scholar-officials,[6] so it is not difficult to understand the relation between certain compelling political and social issues and the topics discussed in the intellectual arena.

Research on Neo-Confucianism trends in Jin after the 1190s

[1] Wm. Theodore de Bary, *The Message of the Mind in Neo-Confucianism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989) pp. 3-6.
[2] For an excellent example, see Tillman, *Neo-Confucian Discourse and Chu Hsi's Ascendancy* (Honolulu: Hawaii University Press, 1992).
[3] Chen Yuan, *Nansong chu Hebei xin Daojiao kao* (Beiping: Fu Jen University Press, 1941), p. 44.
[4] For instance, Zhao Bingwen tried to prevent the publication of Li Chunfu's book on grounds that the latter's book leaned too much towards Buddhism and was hence heretical, cf. Liu Qi, *Gui Qian zhi* (Taipei: Xinwenfeng chuban gongsi, 1984), p. 51.
[5] Yu Yingshi, *Songming lixue yu zhengzhi wenhua* (Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe, 2006) and *Zhu Xi de lishi shijie* (Beijing: Joint Press, 2004), *passim*.
[6] Chan Hok-lam, *Legitimation in Imperial China: Discussions under the Jurchen Jin dynasty (1115-1234)* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984), p. 72.

Jin scholars were traditionally excluded from Neo-Confucian lineage and received less attention compared to the pedigree heirs of Neo-Confucianism, according to the compilers of *Song Yuan xue'an* and early researchers. For example, it was once believed that Jin scholarship was "limited in scope and […] lacked sophistication."[1] However this discrimination has been largely discredited in the light of recent research, which made it clear that Jin intellects were also interested in, with a comparable degree of sophistication, a range of topics actively discussed by Song Neo-Confucians. Not only were the Jin intellects quite clear about the teachings of the Cheng Brothers and willingly learned from them,[2] but also believed to have paved the road for the Neo-Confucianism development in Northern China during Yuan.[3]

The Jin literati and their families were situated in a relatively unfavorable social-economic-political condition, as described in Chang Woei Ong's book on Guanzhong literati.[4] Although it might be an over-generalization to apply Ong's observation to the whole territory of Jin, it can be confidently concluded that the families which once dominated in the local society of the North China plain in the Northern Song did not fare well during Jin. This can also be observed from the biographies written by them. In these biographies, which usually traced families to their earliest possible ancestors, one could only identify at most two (extremely rare), or occasionally one generation with a civil office holder and end with only the names of their heirs.[5] Ong noticed this phenomenon in Guanzhong literati families and postulated that "the absence of material on the later development of the family seems to indicate that it dissolved, with its members sinking

[1] This is the stance taken by Tu Wei-ming, cf. "Liu Yin's Confucian Eremitism", Hok-lam Chan and Wm Theodore de Bary (ed.), *Yüan Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 249.
[2] Tu Wei-ming put it in another way, that "[t]he gap between the North and the South notwithstanding, both the effectiveness and the respectability of the Way were vitally important to all concerned Confucian scholars", ibid, p. 243.
[3] Tillman, "Confucianism under the Chin and the impact of Sung Confucian Tao-hsueh", p. 114.
[4] Chang Woei Ong, *Men of letters within the passes, Guanzhong literati in Chinese history, 907-1911* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2008), pp. 86-90.
[5] According to my survey of biographies written by Wang Ruoxu in *Hunan yilao ji* and by Yuan Haowen in *Yuan Yishan quanji* and some preserved in *Jin Shi*.

into obscurity after only a few decades."[1] Similar to the case in Southern Song, "it became increasingly impossible for a person to rely on an office position alone to bolster his claim to be a *shi*,"[2] where the means to maintain a *shi* identity is learning. Hence the issue of deciding what to learn was crucial for northerners.

One field of learning cherished by Jin scholars is political history, and their interest in this field has led recent researchers to approach the intellectual history of the north with a sense of Song-Jin-Yuan continuum. Franke checked Wang Ruoxu's and Zhao Bingwen's historical work on Tang statecraft and pointed out that these writings show "the extent to which scholars of the Chin trend to preserve T'ang ideas of statecraft."[3] This concept was not invented by Jin Confucians. Franke reminds readers that as early as the eleventh century, in the work of Ouyang Xiu, Tang Taizong was a ruler of the same excellent quality as that of the legendary sage-kings of early antiquity. It seems that Jin Confucians were receptive to Ouyang Xiu's idea that "not only could the Confucius classics serve as the basis for political thought and statecraft, but the histories as well," which was shared by Yuan scholar-officials.[4] This sense of "continuum" is not something which arises only from the wisdom of hindsight, nor is it merely a modern reconstruction, but it was perceived by Jin people too. During the two rounds of debate on legitimacy in late Jin, officials and the emperors were more inclined to construe themselves as the receivers of the mandate from Northern Song, at the expense of Southern Song.[5] Similar to the Mongol regime, a strategy used by the courts to legitimise legitimise their rule was to claim that "they had inherited the Mandate of Heaven from the

[1] Ong, *op. cit.*, p. 89.
[2] Ibid, p. 100.
[3] Franke, "Wang Yün (1227-1304), a transmitter of Chinese values", Herbert Franke (ed.) *China under Mongol rule* (Brookfield: Variorum, 1994), p. 180.
[4] Ibid, p. 181.
[5] Chan Hok-lam, *Legitimation in Imperial China: Discussions under the Jurchen-Chin Dynasty (1115-1234)*, p. 118.

Chin Dynasty".[1] The (Northern) Song-Jin-Yuan continuum, despite being a political theorization, cannot be seen at face value as a manipulation of ideology, as it well reflects the perception of the contemporary history of the people at that time.

In recent decades, research has greatly deepened and widened the scope of our understanding of the Jin intellectual world. However some lacunae remain. For example, as mentioned previously, while we have knowledge of the revival of Jin literature and learning, we are unclear about the details of how a literatus like Wang Ruoxu could have engaged himself in such a revival. We have yet to understand the intellectual strategies which Jin literati adopted to bring about the literary revival in late Jin, and used to establish themselves in the cultural tradition. These can be areas for further exploration.[2]

But why should we consider Wang Ruoxu, and not someone else? What makes him special and valuable is the brutal fact that we lack materials on Jin literati. Only few collections exist, and most of them are literary compositions and anthologies of poetries. Only two of these collections contain works on classics studies and topics of *daoxue*.[3] Unlike other contemporaries, Wang's collections are the only ones written with a strong sense of criticism.

His existing collection contains forty-eight *juan* covering studies on the Classics, history, literary criticism and some other occasional writings, and provides a valuable source revealing the multiple facets of the Jin intellectual world. His work can be and indeed has been approached from various perspectives. Some recent researchers have built their studies on Wang's writing, to solve problems such as literary revival in late Jin and the development of Neo-Confucianism in Jin. For example, Tillman's reconstruction

[1] Thomas Wilson, *Genealogy of the way: the construction and uses of the Confucian tradition in late imperial China* (California: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 49.
[2] There has been some research done in this area, cf. Bol's "Chao Ping-wen (1159-11232): Foundations of Literati Learning", Tillman and Franke (ed.), *China Under Jurchen Rule: Essays in Chin Intellectual and Cultural History*, pp. 115-144.
[3] These two collections are attributed to Zhao Bingwen and Wang Ruoxu.

of the development and spread of Neo-Confucianism in Jin after demise of Northern Song is substantially based on Wang's work.[1] In Bol's research on late Jin literary revival, Wang constituted one of the three central figures which were studied. Bol sees Wang's writing on history and literature as a unique way of representing his devotion to the literary tradition and the outcome of his learning. Wang's writing on the Classics and his evaluation on the literary tradition granted him membership to this tradition and even made him an authority in wielding his own judgment on predecessors in this tradition.[2]

It is reasonable to believe that Wang's performance in Confucian discourse was conscious and reflective, but Wang's approach was by no means a conventional one. His contribution to the literary tradition consisted of a collection of critical essays titled "disputations" (*bian*, 辨) or "disputations on doubts" (*bian yi*, 辨疑), namely essays on contentious points in the Classics and on histories. To answer the question of why Wang wrote his works, Bol suggests that Wang was trying to convey that "Chin literati can have authority over the cultural tradition and critically assess earlier participants in it," and his "disputations" were means for "toppling giants (i.e. commentators whose commentaries to the Classics were sanctioned as authoritative versions for civil service examinations)", since doing so was required to gain authority over the tradition.[3] Recalling the questions mentioned at the opening of this chapter, Bol has the questions of "Why" and "What" answered, but the question of "How" has not been answered as thoroughly. In other words, we know the motivation for and the result of his contribution to the ongoing discussion and commentarial tradition, but we are not as clear on how he managed to achieve it.

[1] Bol, "Seeking common ground: Han literati under Jurchen rule", particularly on Wang, see pp. 512-520. Tillman "Confucianism under the Chin and the impact of Sung Confucian Tao-hsueh", on Wang, see pp. 92-102.
[2] Bol, "Seeking common ground: Han literati under Jurchen rule", p.519.
[3] Ibid, p. 519.

It is proposed that the best way to deal with the question of "How" would be to look into the details of the text of Wang's writings, and analyze his tactics; to attempt to understand his position through a perusal of his critical works. We should know what conceptual tools he implemented and how he used them to understand the Classics, and what reading strategies he adopted and how he adopted them for reading the sacred texts and others' commentaries.

Wang's writings on commentaries to Confucian classics form the foundation for answering the question of "How". A readily available means of entering the Confucian discourse was to write one's own version of commentary. A commentary was not written for its own sake, not solely for fulfilling the commentator's philological or philosophical interest.[1] As Thomas Wilson notes, in the "post-Classical" era (i.e. after Warring States), writing exegesis for the classics was the way to overcome "the gapping hiatus separating the ancient sages from their own day."[2] Writing one's own version of commentary for particular Classics that have already been sanctioned was the standard method of expression for a dissident, and a means for assuming the authority to interpret the sacred meanings.[3] This strategy was implemented by Zhu Xi who "devoted himself to editing texts, compiling anthologies and writing commentaries on the Classics instead of writing treaties to advance his own theories".[4] Wang practiced the opposite way; he mainly wrote critical essays as supplementary material to the well-established commentarial corpus. However, quite different from Southern Song Neo-Confucians whose interpretations were sometimes "too profound" and deviated from the intended meanings, Wang "tended not

[1] On the commentarial works of Song Confucians and the socio-political implication of these commentaries, see Yu Yingshi, *Song Ming lixue yu zhengzhi wenhua*, *passim*.
[2] Thomas Wilson, "Messenger of the ancient sages", Tu Ching-I (ed.) *Classics and Interpretations* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2000), p. 108.
[3] Ibid, p. 108.
[4] Wm. Theodore de Bary, "Chu Hsi's aims as an educator", Wm. Theodore de Bary and John W. Chaffee (ed.), *Neo-Confucian Education: The Formative Stage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), p. 186.

to address larger philosophical issues but to focus on points of detail that could be adjudicated on the basis of context and the meanings of words."[1] An understanding of these critical essays, including the details they focused on, and of the way Wang highlighted and adjudicated these details, is crucial for answering the question of "How".

This research will assess Wang Ruoxu's scholarship and examine how he engaged himself in the cultural tradition he represented in his time. In the studies of early modern China, well-argued frameworks were developed, like the Tang-Song transition and Song-Yuan-Ming transition. These frameworks provided researchers with useful guidelines for studying various aspects of societies mainly in the south. There had been less research interest, however, on North imperial China, until Ong's 2008 book. I believe that knowing the intellectual world of the times is crucial for understanding the contemporary society. Some research has already discovered the interplay between the intellectual world and the society.[2] An understanding of leading representatives in the Jin intellectual arena would be meaningful not only with regards to intellectual history, but also for understanding the north during the Song-Jin-Yuan period. This would include knowing the questions he raised, and how he addressed issues in order to justify his position in the Confucian tradition under a non-Chinese regime.

In this thesis, we present Wang in a holistic manner. The next chapter provides a brief discussion on Wang's life, including his family background, his learning in early years, his working experience in the administrative system, and introduces some important concepts which will be discussed in greater detail in the main part of this project.

[1] Tillman "Confucianism under the Chin and the impact of Sung Confucian Tao-hsueh", p. 95
[2] For example, Bol's *Neo-Confucianism in History* and Yu's *Zhu Xi de lishi shijie*.

CHAPTER ONE

OUTLINE OF WANG RUOXU'S LIFE AND SCHOLARSHIP

Wang Ruoxu's family and educational background

Wang was born during the heyday of Shizong's reign (1161-1189) in a well-to-do family in Gaocheng (藁城, the modern Gaocheng city of Hebei province) of Hebei Eastern Route (河北東路), about 260 kilometers south of the Capital Yanjing (燕京). His parental lineage is obscure and apparently no one before him in his family tree achieved any official position. His father had managed to build a reputation among neighboring villagers, who would go to Wang's father to settle disputations.[1] Wang's father married madam Nee Zhou, who was from a wealthy family, since madam Zhou's brother Zhou Ang (周昂, ?-1211, courtesy name Deqing 德卿, *jinshi* year unknown) was a *jinshi* and worked in the central government with rank 4A. This maternal uncle played an important role in Wang's early education and heavily influenced Wang in his literary criticism.[2] Judging from his mother's family background, it is likely that Wang's family was a local power. Therefore it is not surprising that Wang's family could even afford to build a family shrine for Wang after the Mongolian conquest.[3] The power possessed by the Wang family is also evidenced by Wang's own marriage. His wife came from a powerful

[1] Yuan Haowen, "Neihan Wang gong mubiao", Yao Dazhong (ed.), *Yuan Haowen quanji* (Taiyuan: Shanxi renmin chubanshe, 1990), pp. 441-444.
[2] For example, the section on Wang's literature criticism in Zhan Hanglun's *Jindai wenxue shi* (Taipei: Guanya wenhua shiye gongsi, 1993), pp. 271-285, also Mhairi Kathleen Campbell, "Wang Ruoxu (1174-1243) and his 'Talks on Poetry'", M.A. Thesis of University of Alberta, 2002.
[3] Wu Cheng, "Hunan Wang xiansheng citang ji", *Wu Wenzheng ji* (Wenyuange siku quanshu) *juan* 37.

local family and his brother-in-law Zhao Yuanying (趙元英, fl. 1210, *jinshi* year unknown) obtained *jinshi* degree and served in the government.[1]

Under the Jurchen's reign, the changing social and economical environment made it difficult for one to maintain a distinctive *shi* identity and for families to uphold for the long-term their prestigious scholar-official traditions.[2] Although Wang managed to get a career in the central government, his family stopped producing successful official candidates after him. According to his biography and extant historical material, Wang was the first and only person in his family to pursue Confucian learning and a career in the civil service. Wang received careful instruction at a young age under Zhou Ang's tutelage. When Zhou left for his official posting, he introduced Wang to Liu Zhong (劉中, ?-1210, *jinshi* 1194) to complete Wang's study. Liu was a successful teacher as quite a number of his students received *jinshi* degree,[3] including Wang's cousin Zhou Siming (周嗣明, ?-1211, *jinshi* year unknown). Wang's social network is difficult to reconstruct in detail due to lack of material, but from his writings we know that his friends included a number of *jinshi* in Classics studies, e.g. Peng Zisheng (彭子升, *jinshi* 1201)[4]. We know that Wang traveled with Liu Zhong to Shandong, and acquainted with a certain Li Tong (李仝, courtesy name Zhonghe) who was well educated in Classics learning.[5] It is interesting to note that traditionally, intellectual circles in Wang's hometown Hebei

[1] Wang Ruoxu, "Baoyi fuwei Zhao Gong muzhi", Wang Ruoxu Hu Chuanzhi and Li Dingqian (ed.), *Hunan yilaoji jiaoshi* (Shenyang: Liaohai chubanshe, 2006), p. 520.
[2] Ong, *Men of letters within the passes*, p. 85.
[3] Yuan Haowen, *Yuan Haowen quanji*, p. 867, 8.
[4] Wang Ruoxu, "Jinshi Peng Zisheng muzhi", *Hunan yilaoji jiaozhu*, p. 518,
[5] Ibid, p. 504.

emphasized on Classics studies,[1] and Tillman observed that known *daoxue* figures of Jin came from that area.[2]

Wang passed the civil service examination and received his *jinshi* in Classics studies (經義進士) in 1197 and assumed a series of official posts in various locations. In early years, his posts were mainly in the border counties, while his last few appointments were in central government agencies. He was working in the besieged capital Bianjing (汴京) in 1233-34 during the last days of Jin. After collapse of Bianjing and demise of Jin, he returned to Gaocheng *incognito* and lived in eremitism.[3] In the final stage of his life, Wang paid a visit to Mount Tai. Wang was received by a myriarch Yan Shi (嚴實, 1182-1240), who was famous for his hospitality to scholars and provided shelter and opportunities for many of them during the tumultuous years of Mongol-Jin warfare in the 1230s.[4] Wang passed away on Mount Tai. After his death, his coffin was sent home by his son.[5]

From our previous discussion, we can see that Wang was, to some extent, a member of the "local gentry" described in Robert Hartwell's research.[6] Despite the lack of material detailing the marriage pattern of his family, Wang's father's marriage seemed more like a local one.[7] He was a member of a well-to-do family[8] so he had the luxury of engaging in learning. He was a well learned person specializing in Classics studies,

[1] The first civil service examination held by Jin was in the autumn of 1129, the seventh year of Tianhui reign. People from the Hebei area were put in the stream of "Classics studies" (經義), cf. Tuotuo (ed.) *Jin Shi*, p. 1106.
[2] Tillman and Franke (ed.), *China under Jurchen Rule*, p. 81, 2.
[3] Yuan Haowen, "Neihan Wang gong mubiao" *op. cit.*, p. 442.
[4] Tuotuo (ed.), *Jin Shi* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975), p. 3506.
[5] On Wang Ruoxu's passing away, see Yuan Haowen, "Neihan Wang gong mubiao", *op. cit*., p. 441-442.
[6] Robert Hartwell, "Demographic, Political, and Social Transformations of China, 750-1550", *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 42, 2 (1982), pp. 365-442.
[7] We have scant information about Wang's mother. But his maternal uncle Zhou Ang lived in the same county as Wang's family. So it is reasonable to conclude Wangs' marriage was local.
[8] According to Wu Cheng's commemoration article for the shrine dedicated to Wang Ruoxu, there are three prominent families in the county and Wang's family is one of them, see Wu Cheng, "Hunan Wang xiansheng citang ji". *Wu Wenzheng ji*, *op. cit*., *juan* 37.

history and literary criticism. Wang's training in these disciplines shaped his unique approach to cultural traditions and Confucian learning. In the trend of Cheng-Zhu learning, he was quite independent; he was willing to exercise his own judgment to choose his own way, to construct his version of *dao*.

Wang's career in the administrative system

The Jin court adopted traditional Han practice in their administrative system and transformed its administrative system "from tribal council to a Chinese-style government".[1] When Wang entered the officialdom, although the bequests of Shizong's reign such as good foreign relationship, high productivity, and booming education were in place, the country had quite likely passed its prime in terms of military power. Wang's career in the government cannot be described as a peaceful journey. His early postings were in bordering counties, where pressures on neighboring countries like Xi Xia (西夏) and Southern Song (南宋) were becoming apparent then. Wang personally experienced the conflict between Jin and Xi Xia during his tenure in Menshan district (門山縣), although his district did not suffer much from the warfare.[2] During his last few postings, the nightmare of Mongolian invasion became a real threat, and Wang was engaged in the coup-d'état led by traitor general Cui Li (崔立) who surrendered the capital Bianjing to Mongol.[3]

Except for those life-threatening episodes, Wang's experience in bureaucracy probably helped him in developing his scholarship enterprise. There are some crucial points in his career which deserve particular attention (see appendix for his postings).

[1] Herbert Franke and Denis Twitchett, *Cambridge History of China vol. 6: Alien regimes and border states, 907-1368*, pp. 265-273.
[2] Wang Ruoxu, "Menshan xian liyintang ji", *op. cit.*, p. 394.
[3] Tuotuo (ed.), *Jin Shi*, p. 2738.

First is his posting as Administrative Clerk (錄事) in Sizhou (泗州). Sizhou was a county in the Nanjing Route (南京路), and south of it lays Southern Song's Huainan Eastern Route (淮南東路). In 1159, Prince Hailing ordered the closure of all monopoly markets trading with Southern Song except for the market in Sizhou.[1] Illegal book trading was active there, it was reported that in 1172 a Southern Song merchant tried to smuggle sixteen carts of contraband books to Jin.[2] It is quite possible that his post gave him convenient access to Southern Song publications. The second important post of interest for our study is Left Remonstrator (左司谏). Wang's interest in Confucianism was positively enhanced during his tenure in this position, where he had a company of scholars with the same educational background and who shared common interest in discussing Confucianism.[3] His friends in the officialdom, like Ma Jiuchou (麻九畴 1183-1232), Zhao Bingwen (趙秉文, 1159-1232, *jinshi* 1185), and Li Chunfu (李純甫, 1177-1223, *jinshi* 1197) were famous scholars and were well schooled in Confucianism. Among them, Li Chunfu was acute in criticizing Confucianism, while Wang in various occasions defeated Li's sophisticated arguments.[4] This form of interaction seems inspired Wang to a certain degree. Furthermore, when his colleague Fu Qi (傅起) compiled a collection titled *Daoxue fayuan ji* (道學發源集, *Anthology on the origin and development of Neo-Confucianism*) containing an abridged version of Zhang Jiucheng's commentaries on *The Analects*, *Mencius*, *Doctrine of mean* and the *Great Learning*. Wang wrote a postscript titled "Daoxue fayuan houxu" ("道學發源後序", "Postscript to *Anthology on the origin and development of Neo-Confucianism*") for this book.

[1] Ibid, p. 598.
[2] Li Xinchuan, *Jianyan yilai chaoye zaji* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2000), pp.149, 150.
[3] Wang Ruoxu, "Daoxue fayuan houxu", *op. cit.*, p. 533.
[4] Yuan Haowen, *Yuan Haowen quanji*, p. 881.

Wang's attitude towards commentaries on Confucian classics and the commentators before Jin

"Daoxue fayuan houxu" is an important document for elucidating Wang's attitude to the Neo-Confucianism legacy. He gave full credit to the Neo-Confucians of Northern Song in postscript by agreeing that they "revealed the profound secret [of the Confucian Classics], and revitalized this study from centuries of severance". He then related academic excellence to social and administrative work by examining the development of Confucian studies in Jin and concluded that "this country has been in peace for a long time, the state recruits its officials by testing their Classics studies." In addition, he pointed out that Classics studies were not adequate for self-cultivation; that the importance of having a book on "*dao*" should not be overlooked, since in pursuing *dao*, "one could discuss the issues and search for the truth of principle, and one would not be insular in commentaries". This anthology was especially valuable since "the theory of promoting the *dao* was less heard of in Jin" until *Daoxue fayuan ji* was compiled. [1]

Here it is mentionable that in the face of Wang and his contemporaries, the proponents of "*dao*" were not solely from the group of "Neo-Confucians". Everyone was searching for *dao* via reading and practicing. Wang was acute in discerning the differences in the reading strategies and practices of Song scholars interpreting the Classics. For example, he noticed that Su Shi's approach is quite different from Chengs', and he once mentioned in passing that although Su's readings were penetrating and genuine, they were not as thoroughly-thought out as Chengs'.[2] His stance corroborates the rhetoric he used in postscript.

[1] Wang Ruoxu, *op. cit.*, p. 533.
[2] Ibid, p. 289.

Certain sentences in his postscript give readers the impression that the postscript was written by a Song Neo-Confucian, e.g. the sentence "Song Confucians revealed the profound secret, and revived this study from centuries of severance" seems to be retelling Cheng Yi's eulogy for Cheng Hao,[1] whom was depicted as the first person after Mencius to rediscover the concealed *dao*. Wang also used the term "true Confucian" (*zhen ru*), which was also used by Cheng Yi in describing his late brother Cheng Hao in the eulogy. Wang also learnt to use Song Neo-Confucian catch-phrases like "heavenly principle" and "human desires", but in other writings and critical essays, he never resorted to these. Wang's generous commendations for Song Neo-Confucians' achievements were possibly a result of the nature of this postscript, which was written upon others' request, and hence it usually applauds, rather than criticizes. The credits given to them echoed his evaluation in his "Lunyu bianhuo xu" ("論語辨惑序", "Preface to critical essays to *the Analects*") where he summarized that Song Neo-Confucians, like the Cheng Brothers and Zhang Jiucheng, were able to discover the hidden message in *The Analects* and their contributions to the commentarial tradition were invaluable.[2] However, Wang was more generous to them in this "postscript" and more critical in writing the "Preface", in which he noticed that their interpretations sometimes stretched the text to such an extent that their thoughts became unrealistic and the sage's message was misunderstood.

Compared to the Song commentators and commentaries, Wang showed less interest to pre-Song commentators in discussions of the sage's intention. He pointed out that pre-Song Confucians were not capable in eliciting the sage's intention and were not aware of the *dao*. But on the issues of philology, Wang would prefer pre-Song Confucians' research for their conservatism, in contrast to Song commentators'

[1] Chen Yi, "Mingdao xiansheng mubiao", Cheng Hao and Cheng Yi, *Er Cheng ji* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981), p. 120.
[2] Wang Ruoxu, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

philologically unsound reading. This was noticed by Bol, who suggests that Wang attempted to synthesize pre-Song and Song commentaries in his critical essays.[1]

From Wang's work, one could discern not only his efforts to synthesize pre-Song and Song commentaries, but also his attempt to experiment with intriguing reading strategies (like *yi yi ni zhi*, 以意逆志, "sympathetic understanding") and apply some re-worked (like his *renqing*, 人情 "human feeling") and innovative (e.g. *wenshi yufa*, 文勢語法, literarily, the potential of literary composition and grammar") conceptual tools in reading and understanding the classics and the sage. The terminology given to these reading strategies and conceptual tools, in contrast to the abstract and philosophically intoned vocabulary used in Neo-Confucianism exegesis, sound mundane and are of more philological propensity, but was never impoverished in intellectual and philosophical meaningfulness. Bol noticed Wang's favorite concept *renqing* and thought that Wang's interest in this concept showed his lack of interest in deeper meanings.[2] However, Tillman compared *renqing* with the Southern Neo-Confucian's "*ren xing*" (human nature) and tried to demonstrate that *renqing* is not necessarily a concept without deeper implications.[3] There are also more possibilities for us to understand Wang's *renqing* in his reading and writing.

A less noticed concept by Wang is *Yi yi ni zhi*, which also represents his sincere admonition to students of the Classics, as with Mencius's instruction to Xianqiu Meng in reading the *Odes*.[4] In many occasions in his critical essays, Wang would deny authentic commentaries and propose his own reading, and remind readers to bear "*yi yi ni zhi*" in

[1] Bol, "Seeking common ground: Han literati under Jurchen Rule", p. 515.
[2] Ibid, p. 517.
[3] Tillman, "Confucianism under the Chin and the impact of Sung Confucian Tao-hsueh", p. 97.
[4] Mencius said to Xianqiu Meng that "in explaining an ode, one should not allow the words to get in the way of the sentence, nor the sentence to get in the way of the sense. The right way is to meet the intention of the poet with sympathetic understanding". D. C. Lau (tr.), *Mencius* (London: Penguin Books, 2004), p. 104.

mind, so as to grasp the intended meaning of the sacred texts, lest one be misled by unsound commentaries. The relationship between *yi* and *zhi* is a contentious topic that goes beyond its original context of discussion regarding the interpretation of odes, but Wang demonstrated how to engage *yi* in reading and understanding, to elicit the *zhi* conveyed in the text.

Wenshi yufa are two words but sometimes used interchangeably or as one word, with the former concerning the art of development of rhetoric by choosing an appropriate genre or style of writing, and the latter concerning grammatically correct utilization of auxiliary verbs, propositions and pronouns. This special attention to philological and grammatical matters perhaps derived from Wang's personal propensities and his working experience in the Institute of History, where grammatical knowledge and acuteness in semantics were crucial in preparing documents. His working experience perhaps enhanced his capabilities and sharpened his awareness in discerning flaws in written texts that impede efficacious conveyance of meaning. *Wenshi yufa* are used to adjudicate commentaries and to uncover the flaws in Classics caused in the process of transcribing, compiling and other editorial work.

Wang's scholarly enterprise represented an important aspect of the Jin intellectual world which we can reconstruct thus far. The methods in classics studies Wang introduced were unique. Without these, Wang's critical essay would be no different from an annotated catechism of Confucian teaching. In the following chapters, I will examine the various strategies and conceptual tools Wang introduced into Confucian learning to assess his contribution to the intellectual world of his time.

CHAPTER TWO

THE CONCEPT OF *RENQING* IN WANG'S CRITICAL ESSAYS

Wang Ruoxu's writings on Classics, history and literature have attracted much scholarly interest. In particular, his writings on Classical studies have come under the investigation of specialists like Bol and Tillman. Bol, in attempting to answer the question of why Wang Ruoxu wrote the "text-critical studies", suggested that Wang "set out to participate in and master 'This culture of Ours'", to synthesize the different schools of Confucian theories, "to integrate useful ideas and define doctrine". In contrast with Song Confucians, especially Neo-Confucians, Bol noticed that Wang "drew his readers away from a quest for philosophical foundations, deeper meanings and enduring tensions". Bol emphasized on Wang's key concept of *renqing*, which "can be understood through common sense, to decide the sage's message conveyed in the *Analects*". [1]

In his study on Jin Confucianism, Tillman noticed that Wang's *renqing* ("human feeling") is one of the two criteria (the other is *tiandao*, the Way of Heaven) used to judge the "corpora of the cultural tradition". Tillman thought that by evaluating former commentators, Wang meant to put himself between Han-Tang and Song scholarship, i.e. between philology and philosophy,[2] wherein *renqing* is one key concept Wang anchors his Classics studies.

My understanding of Wang Ruoxu's Classical studies, his critical essays on the Five Classics, the *Analects* and the *Mencius* is developed from this early research. And I believe that by restoring Wang's *renqing* into the referential framework of the trajectory of *renqing* in intellectual history, a more detailed picture of the development of Jin

[1] Bol, "Seeking common ground: Han literati under Jurchen rule", pp. 514, 516, 519.
[2] Tillman, "Confucianism under the Chin and the impact of Sung Tao-hsueh", pp. 96-101.

Confucianism will emerge, which in turn may shed light on our understanding of intellectual history during Song-Jin-Yuan era.

In this chapter, I will conduct a preliminary survey on the development of meanings and applications of *renqing* in the commentarial tradition in Confucianism, in order to provide a frame of reference for Wang's *renqing*. Then I will demonstrate how Wang uses *renqing* to challenge cultural traditions, to establish his own authority over other schools within Confucianism, especially Southern Song Neo-Confucianism. Lastly I will discuss the importance of Wang's *renqing* in his Classical studies, to compare and contrast his understanding of Confucianism with Song scholars so as to orientate his position in the Song-Jin-Yuan intellectual tradition.

Renqing **in intellectual discourse**

Wang Ruoxu's *renqing* does not come from his own contriving, as scholars before him had used this concept in their reading of Classics and writing of commentaries. Northern Song witnessed a trend of using *renqing* in understanding Classics and writing on canonical works - on *Odes*, historical essays, for instance. Expanding the historical scope further, we notice that this concept had been introduced in the Classics and commentaries in the early stages of Confucianism tradition.

Renqing **in the formative stage of Confucianism tradition**

Renqing in Confucian writing can be traced back to as early as Warring State to Han, e.g. in *Records of Rites*, and was introduced into pre-Song commentaries on Classics. The development of *renqing* in the commentarial tradition requires thorough examination, which is a task beyond the scope of this study, but a preliminary survey is necessary for setting a frame of reference to study Wang Ruoxu. Studies of *renqing* in Chinese intellectual history did not yet produce a dedicated monograph. Most of the

relevant studies on it was included in research on Song scholars like Ouyang Xiu and Su Shi, and on *qing*, or emotion, but most of the time without a clear distinction between *qing* and *renqing*. In an early attempt to address *rengqing*, Graham noticed that *renqing* in *Record of Rites* is "the genuine and unassumed in man".[1] However, Graham did not take *renqing* in pre-Han materials as a compound word but a phrase, in which *ren* was loosely attached to *qing*, resulting in *renqing*, which represents something essential that makes a human being human. Graham's "essential"-ness of *renqing* in making up a human being was denied by Hansen, who would rather take *renqing* in *Record of Rites* as a human being's innate character that is "being preconventional or prelearned."[2]

From Angus Graham and Chad Hanson's work, it seems that in their research into emotion, or *qing*, scholars encountered a term that is not very emotional, and cannot be conglomerated into the class of affectivity. This is due to the wide semantic range of *qing*, as Eifring noticed, "at all points in time, the term *qing* is highly ambiguous, much more so than the English term emotion."[3]

The most comprehensive survey so far on the semantics of *qing* was done by Harbsmeier.[4] He searched a wide range of pre-Han and Han writings in order to show the full spectrum of *qing*'s meanings in various genres. He then categorized seven basic meanings of *qing*, and to each basic meaning, he attached a number of supporting documents he discovered from the corpus. Among the seven kinds, three attract my attention, since in the supporting materials attached to them, *qing* is always affixed to *ren*, in the form of *renqing*, or in a relatively loose manner, *ren zhi qing* (the *qing* of *ren*). The

[1] Angus Graham, "The Mencian Theory of Human Nature", *Tsing Hua Journal of Chinese Studies*, New series VI, 1 and 2, (December 1967), p. 263.
[2] Chad Hansen, "*Qing* in Pre-Buddhist Chinese Thought", Joel Marks and Roger T. Ames (ed.), *Emotions in Asian Thought, a Dialogue in Comparative Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), p. 202.
[3] Halvor Eifring, "Introduction: emotions and the conceptual history of *qing*", Halvor Eifring (ed.), *Love and Emotions in traditional Chinese Literature* (Brill: Leiden, 2004), p. 5.
[4] Christoph Harbsmeier, "The semantics of *Qing* in Pre-Buddhist Chinese", ibid, pp. 69-148.

three kinds "*renqing*" are: 1, political: basic popular sentiments/response; 2, anthropological: general basic instincts and 3, positive: essential sensibilities and sentiments that are viewed as commendable. Compared to these three types, other kinds of "*qing*" listed in the research are in the form of monomers and do not have the implication of "collective"-ness, nor a semantic range covering from neutral to positive undertones.

From Harbsmeier's research, the implication of the formation of *renqing* by conjugating *ren* with *qing* is perceivable. It shows a shift from a sense of personal and private affective arousal and/or response, to a sense of collective, public opinion and/or tendency. This shift coined the term *renqing*, whose epistemic significance can be discerned from the types of texts adopting it; it was most commonly used in writings on political theory, ritual and philosophy.[1] *Renqing* is based on human affectivity, instincts and inclinations, and it is not exclusively a personal sentimental state or emotional activity, but a collection of *qing* of the whole population under consideration.

<u>*Renqing* in commentarial traditions from Han to Song</u>

Meanings of *Renqing* with the sense of "politics" and "anthropological" were occasionally used in early Classical studies work compiled during Han and Jin. In one case, in He Xiu's subcommentary of the Gongyang commentary for the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, he mentions:[2]

> The sage by probing into *renqing* regulates benefits.
>
> 聖人探人情以制恩。

In another case:[3]

> Climb a high hill to view the vista is what *renqing* is willing to do.

[1] Ibid, pp. 71, 96-99.
[2] Li Xueqin (ed.) *Shisanjing zhushu, Chunqiu Gongyang zhuan zhushu* (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1999), p. 117.
[3] Ibid, p. 183.

登高遠望，人情所樂。

It is quite clear here *renqing* is "general basic instincts", similar to Fan Ning's explanation of "in the fifth month, King Huan was interred"[1] as "to leave the corpse for seven years to wait for the lords of other states to attend the funeral does not fit *renqing*"[2].

In these writings, *renqing* was used by commentators to make sense of Gongyang Shou and Guliang Chi's commentaries, but the writings were not meant to challenge their interpretations. Han scholars used *renqing* in reading *Analects* too, but very rarely. Only two cases of this were found in Han commentaries to the *Analects*, one by Kong Anguo, the other entry by Zhousheng Lie.[3] In both cases, Confucius was remarking on some dubious or unacceptable conduct, and in Kong and Zhousheng's annotations *renqing* was set in a context hued with negative sense and was being understood in this way: once a person cracked the mystery of how to know *renqing*, he would rather take advantage of it to predict what other people think or feel, so as to efficiently humor other people for his own benefit. In Kong Anguo's and Zhousheng Lie's annotations, *renqing* is the preference of other people (different from Harbsmeier's "general basic instincts", which has a notion of being constant, being not subject to precariousness). This preference is subject to drastic change over time, as Kong noticed, "perhaps such person [who predicts *renqing* of other people] would be blamed by others at some other time." And Zhousheng noticed that "[he] went to a place and predict the *renqing* there, in order to make him mind accordingly." That means both of them did not consider *renqing* as the general instinct of people, but as preference of certain people at certain time (as in Kong's commentary) or at certain place (as in Zhousheng's). These commentators believed that

[1] Li Xueqin (ed.), *Shisanjing zhushu, Chunqiu Guliang zhuan zhushu* (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1999), p. 66.
[2] Ibid, p. 66.
[3] He Yan, Huang Kan et al, *Lunyu jijie yishu* (Taipei: Xinwenfeng chuban gongsi, 1984), p. 197 and 238.

one who adjusts his conduct according to his speculation on *renqing* of someone or some place was morally inferior. "It's detrimental and disturbing to one's virtue," remarked Zhousheng Lie, and Kong Anguo questioned "Is this the behavior of a worthy person?". A person who behaves according to *renqing*, which is protean and precarious, is subject to change and is without constant significance. According to what Kong and Zhousheng understood, *renqing* is not with transcendent value or ever-lasting quality. What they focused on was the content of *renqing*, as listed in the *Records of Rites*, the seven emotional states.

In the above-cited two examples in annotations to the *Analects*, *renqing* is something exterior to an individual's own bodily realm, is out of one's control and is amoral. This is not unlike Virag's reading of emotion, *qing* in "Yue Ji", which says: "the realm of emotions is ontologically distinct from the realm of moral nature." The word "emotion" here represents "one's arousal into a state of motion, which is both caused by things in the world and represents the desire for things." [1] So this time, emotion, as the content of *renqing*, is not tagged with a positive intonation. It then becomes a point of contention in the determination of the sage's superior quality, as noted by Makeham,[2] from Han to Sui-Tang, that "popularity of the topic of whether, like other people, the sage have emotional responses" stretched to cover a long period. And although scholars may vary in degree, generally their opinion as surveyed by Makeham was that: the sage is not necessarily free of emotional responses, but only he knows how to regulate his emotions properly. One needs to constrain his emotion, lest he indulge in it.

Northern and Southern Song scholars' *renqing*

[1] Curie Virag, "Emotions and Human Agency in the thought of Zhu Xi", *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies*, 37 (2007), p. 65.
[2] John Makeham, *Transmitters and creators, Chinese commentators and commentaries on the Analects*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Centre, 2003), pp. 110-3.

The attention given to *renqing*, or the intent to include *renqing* in reflections of the cultural tradition, is prominent during Northern Song. Ouyang Xiu was among the first to pay attention to *renqing*. For Ouyang Xiu, *renqing*, sometimes in the abbreviated form *qing*, laid a new foundation for meaning after the collapse of the Tang cosmic order and before *li* was "rediscovered" by Neo-Confucians, when Ouyang Xiu stood on the stage of intellectual history as an intermediating figure.[1] Thus "*renqing*" at Ouyang Xiu's time was an intermediating term that attempted to fill the lacuna between Tang's cosmic resonance model and the Neo-Confucian nature and principle model. Ouyang Xiu's *renqing* used in his studies on the *Odes* was characterized as "emotional responses to the actualities of life"; as Bol put it: "this classics reveals the tao of the sage not as a set of universal principles but as the sage's understanding that morality consists of typical emotional responses".[2]

In the mid-eleventh century, from a historcal perspective, Su Xun was another champion of *renqing* in studies on the six Classics. Bol read Su Xun's studies as implying that "This Culture of Ours […] was the by-product of attempts to make a connection between institutional authority and human feeling, *jen-ch'ing*."[3] Bol noticed that Su Xun was in the group that was trying "to establish a role for scholars and culture that brings together political authority and the human condition in a manner that does not require the denial of the individual and his feelings and desires."[4] *Renqing* was used by the following generation to read and revise history. In Su Shi's treatises on historical figures, *renqing* was an important theme in understanding the unfolding of historical events.[5] Besides

[1] Michael Fuller, "Review article of Ronald Egan *The Literary Works of Ouyang Xiu (1007-72)." Bulletin of Sung-Yuan Studies*, 19 (1987), p. 63.
[2] Bol, *"This Culture of Ours"*, p. 201.
[3] Ibid, p. 204.
[4] Ibid, p. 206.
[5] Ibid, pp. 264-9.

historical studies, *renqing* was used in reading Classics and writing commentaries. In order to contribute to the quest for the sage's dao, in his "Zhongyong lun", Su Shi wrote:[1]

> Considered from the roots, the Way of the Sage entirely emerges from human feelings.
>
> 夫聖人之道，自本而觀止，則皆出于人情。

Murck believed that Su Shi's "strong validation given here to human feelings and to pleasure contrasts with a view of moral self-cultivation as something requiring intense effort, part of which might be considered self-disciplinary".[2] Murck saw Su Shi's "human feeling" as having pragmatic importance to "lend support to social custom and ameliorate the coercive element in the Confucian concept of ritual."[3] I read Su Shi's writing from a different angle. For Su Shi, the institutions and rites the sage implemented are meant to first give due acknowledgement of the existence of *renqing* as something that one cannot afford to neglect when regulating the world, and second, to give the content of *renqing* the opportunity to be satisfied through an established mechanism, e.g. mourning for sadness, fest for happiness. Observed on a technical level, notwithstanding, these institutions and rituals are nothing but regulatory measures. In Su Shi's writing, *renqing* linked the imminent experience of a human being's daily activity with sacred institutions of mystical history.

Su Shi assigned *renqing* as the root, the fount of the sage's dao. Su Shi focused on the very existence of *renqing* in human being, and shifted the notion from the content to the ontology of *renqing*. Su Shi's interpretation, that *renqing* transcends time and space functioning from the sage's time to the present, and that the content of *renqing* is universally shared, were basic assumptions in Song times too. This shift in the notion of

[1] Translation as in Christian Murck, "Shu Shih's reading of the *Chuong yung*", Susan Bush and Christian Murck (ed.), *Theories of the Arts in China*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), p. 277.
[2] Ibid, p. 278.
[3] Ibid, p. 280.

existence of *renqing* started from Song and provided a new understanding of *renqing*. It seems that in the mid-eleventh century, in contrast to an earlier era, *renqing* was being included in the vocabulary used in understanding and reflecting the cultural tradition, and in the construction of an intelligible and reasonable cultural tradition. Based on the reality of *renqing* and their own understanding of it, Ouyang and Su tried to make sense of the tradition from misunderstandings. It was an obvious trend in Northern Song, during the time of intellectual liberalism, that many ideas were included, and tested out in Classics studies. *renqing* enjoyed such treatment in this period; it was included in the vocabulary of Confucian hermeneutics.

Renqing before Zhu Xi's ascendency seemed to hold a very strong trend in Song intellectual circles. But it seems this term was not given much attention in the Southern Song Neo-Confucian coterie. Murck noticed that compared with Su Shi's work on "Zhong yong", the Cheng-Zhu school based on the same work produced a set of more detailed commentaries and more importantly, a "more powerful unified theoretical structure",[1] in which *renqing* occupied no place whatsoever, but their emphasis on *qing* was not diminished.

<u>*Qing* and *renqing* in Song</u>

Occasionally *renqing* can be abbreviated as *qing*, but they are never interchangeable in any genre and discipline in Song.[2] The trajectory of philosophization of *qing* deserves a consideration. To delineate the discourse domain *qing* occupied, it is helpful to chart the map of *renqing*. We will notice that in reading Classics and other disciplines e.g. history, *qing* and *renqing* were used to adjust the reader's perspective according to different observing levels. For Su Shi, Virag noticed, emotion is bridging a

[1] Ibid, p. 285.
[2] Ouyang quite confidently asserted that "the order of Yao, Shun and the three kings must be necessarily based on *renqing*," and the antithesis of being "based on *renqing*" is "being odd" and "going against *qing*". cf. "Zong qiu lun", *Ouyang Xiu quanji*, p. 1123. Here Ouyang gave readers an explicit example of an abbreviated form of *renqing* as *qing*.

personal and private experience to transcendence, because "emotions represent a level of experience shared by all people, they could show how shared judgments about right and wrong, good and bad, emanated from within, rather than being imposed from without. They could thus constitute an important basis for a theory of ethics," and "emotion can become part of an understanding of genuine experience that could go beyond the private and subjective realm." After Su Shi, the concept of *qing* was nuanced further to include a sense of collective experiences. But how did Su Shi achieve this? "Seeking to understand the most basic common denominator among all humans, Su ventured into the very question of what it was that made humans human, and his notion of an emotional disposition that all human shared attempted to show that everyone, despite differences in their abilities and in their moral behavior, possessed the same underlying constitution."[1]

Virag noticed that "the emotions that Su referred to were […] about an underlying and constant disposition; the emotions were joined with both the realm of absolute virtues and the experience of comprehensive understandings." Her conclusions were drawn by and large from Su's writings on literature and history not so much from Classics studies and Confucianism scholarship, in areas which the early generation of Neo-Confucians' work are considered. [2]

Qing was psychologized by Zhang Zai who concluded that *qing* is a function of the mind, and is on the same plane as is *xing*, nature. This was further elaborated by Zhu Xi. Virag noticed that "Zhu's theory of the unity of the nature and feelings, […] implied not only a temporal continuity of the self, but also a spatially-defined domain", and Zhu Xi allegedly went so far as to say that "he made emotions a function of the moral self", and "psychologized the emotions, and created a theory by which objective norms and subjective experiences […] could be 'intermingled in the tiny space of the mind'." This

[1] Virag, *op. cit.*, p. 262-273.
[2] Ibid, p.273.

is to say that Zhu Xi's approach to *qing* and his development of this concept is to treat it at a psychological level, to situate *qing* in an individual's mind and to see *qing* as a function of an individual's agency. "Realm of emotions are not independent of human nature, but represent an inherent condition of the mind […] For Zhu Xi, the emotions are intrinsic to one's self-realization as an ethical subject".[1] By doing so, Zhu restored *qing* to its personal and private property and left the implication of collectivity to *renqing*.

Compared with *qing* (emotion), *renqing* fared less well in the Neo-Confucianism system. In Zhu Xi's synthesis, it was relegated to a colloquial term and was used mostly in daily conversation.[2] This is because of the different emphasis on connotations possessed by *renqing*; it was less likely to be used in Zhu Xi's synthesis, which concerns more of principle and theoretical coherence, but it found itself in Ouyang and Su's "sociological" theories and their Confucian hermeneutics, which were pertaining more to the cultural tradition from a sociological perspective and supra-individual level.[3]

The discussion on *qing* aims to contrast the parallel development of theorization of *renqing* in Song-Jin period so as to situate Wang Ruoxu's *renqing* in a better-defined position in twelfth century intellectual history.

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[1] Ibid, p. 66-78.

[2] A brief survey of *Lunyu jingyi* and *Lunyu jizhu* will give the reader contrasting pictures on how each book deploys *renqing* in t heir interpretation of the *Analects*. In *Lunyu Jingyi*, there are 15 cases of *renqing*, in *Si Shu huowen*, 19, and *Lunyu jizhu*, 4. *Lunyu jingyi* (Essential meanings of the *Analects*) is part of the *Lun Meng jingyi*, completed in 1172, containing 10 commentators' selected annotations. But it seems that Zhu Xi was not satisfied with its commentarial quality, this cannot attributed to the commentators whose notices were included, but to the criteria of editorship. Later Zhu made *Lunyu lüejie* (Summary explanation of the *Analects*). In *Zhuzi yulei* 2: 439, Zhu made a reference to this summary: "Recently I have written *Lunyu lüejie*, I wrote it because *Jingyi* is too detailed, explaining matters without grasping the important places. Much of it would appear to require the reader to make an effort in vain. Now that I look at it, however, I think that if one reads only *Lüejie* and does not read *Jingyi*."

To *Lunyu huowen*, according to Makeham's reading, this book "was a repository for material that had not been selected for inclusion in *Collected Annotations* (i.e. *Lunyu jizhu*)". So perhaps the assumption that the quality and appropriateness of content in Zhu's different editions of commentarial works on the *Analects* is correlated to the quantity of the term *renqing* being used may not be unthinkable. But correlation is not causation, which requires further study. On editorial work done by Zhu Xi on these different commentaries to the *Analects*, see Makeham, *Transmitters and creators*, pp. 401-3.

[3] Wang Ruoxu adopts this approach, and used *renqing* in the ways as Ouyang and Su did. But Wang Ruoxu is conscious about Zhu Xi's synthesis and thinks high about it, and his *renqing* is his effort to bring Zhu Xi's system back to equilibrium, for overly philosophizing and psychologizing is deviant from the middle path, the way the sage paved.

Functions of Wang Ruoxu's *renqing*

A recurrent problem which students of Classics faced was figuring out how to read and understand canonical texts that were interpreted over and over again by a commentarial tradition spanning more than one thousand years (by Wang Ruoxu's time). This problem was more complicated than before in the Jin-Southern Song period, as schools of different teachings had been wrestling for supremacy for knowledge of the messages carried in the Classics over the ancients and coevals, especially the Cheng Brothers teachings known as Daoxue in southern China.[1] Wang Ruoxu was not at the geographic location of the reformation, but he did not exempt himself from joining the ongoing search for truth. Differing from those who wrote their own versions of commentaries or synthesized traditional and contemporary commentaries to produce "collected annotations", Wang chose the format of a critical essay so that he could debate with others on how to fix the problems in the works of former scholars and offer his own understanding.

By Wang's time, one of the central themes in reading Classics was to understand the sage's intention in the Classics. Different scholars, based on their commentarial assumptions, developed various conceptual tools to decode the sage's intention.[2] One may not expect to recognize all the assumptions in any single Confucian writing. Some scholars would make certain assumptions and not pay attention to others. Scholars of

[1] Bol, *Neo-Confucian in History* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Asia Center, 2008), pp. 78-83.

[2] These tools were meant to be used for theoretical guidance, to provide readers with correct understanding, through induction and deduction to discover the sage's meaning. The commentarial assumptions can be listed as follows: (adapted from Henderson, *Scripture, Canon and Commentary*, pp. 89 (no. 1), 106 (no. 2), 115 (no. 3) and 121 (nos. 4-6)) No. 1, canon is comprehensive and all-encompassing; it contains all significant learning and truth; 2, canons are well ordered and coherent, arranged according to some logical, cosmological or pedagogical principles; 3, canon is self-consistent, internal contradictions in it are only apparent; 4, the classics are moral; 5, the classics are profound and 6, they contain nothing superfluous or insignificant, cf. John B. Henderson, *Scripture, Canon and Commentary: a comparison of Confucian and western exegesis* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), pp. 89-121.

different times would emphasise on different assumptions, but collectively we can see that the Confucians' readings of the Classics were by and large based on the following assumptions. Wang Ruoxu's basic assumption reads: [1]

> The words of the sage were nothing more than *renqing*, this is why the words are clear, easy to understand, centered on the mean and enduring.
>
> 聖人之言，亦人情而已，是以明白而易知，中庸而可久。

A problem which prevented people from achieving a good understanding was the imperfectness of the Classics. Wang was aware of the imperfectness of the Classics. He felt that students should never take alleged authorship of dubious passages in Classics for granted:[2]

> Those who were born thousands of years after the sage's demise have no chance to meet the sage personally for verification, so what they can do is nothing more than to make sure (their understandings) fit the principles and are congruent to the normality of *renqing*.
>
> 士生千載之後，不獲親見聖人，是非真僞無從而質之，則亦求乎義理之安，而合乎人情之常而已。

As he remarks on Su Ting's "夷齊四皓優劣論", which in part Wang cites:[3]

> Su Ting of the Tang wrote on Yi, Qi and the Four elders: "The Four elders were deemed as worthies by Zifang, Yi and Qi were praised for their benevolence by Confucius." Isn't it so that being praised for benevolence by Confucius is better than being deemed as worthies by Zifang?"
>
> 唐蘇頲論夷齊四皓優劣雲：“四皓見賢于子房，夷齊稱仁于宣父。與其稱仁于宣父，不猶愈于見賢于子房哉？”

[1] Wang, *op. cit.*, p. 34. Translation as in Tillman, "Confucianism under the Chin" p. 96, with modification.
[2] Wang, *op. cit.*, p. 25.
[3] Ibid, p. 336.

Wang disagreed with this idea, because the Su are only known to rely on ancients, and not search for genuine truth themselves, but using the ancients' judgment to make one's own is simply laughable. Wang thought highly of Lü Zuqian's idea that "[the one who] followed Confucius' appraisal to praise someone can hardly be regarded as having good knowledge of that person [he praises]".[1] Wang would never take anyone's judgment unconditionally; this echoes Wang's belief that even a theory alleged to be sage's should be gauged against *renqing* to determine its authenticity. The universality of *renqing* ensures the normality of the sage's message, which may be corrupted by unsound information creeping into the Classics. *Renqing* overcomes obstacles set by the commentary tradition, and bridges readers with the sage by overcoming the hiatus caused by the passing of time.

<u>*Renqing*, a challenge to received pre-Song commentary tradition</u>

> The *Spring and Autumn Annals* is a book about *renqing*; however, can such interpretations [in Zuo commentary and Du Yu's subcommentary] be considered as following *renqing*?[2]
>
> 《春秋》，人情之書也。若是之類，可謂近于人情乎？

What Wang Ruoxu disagrees with here is a certain formula (*li*, 例) that the Zuo commentary formulated from the vocabulary of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. The idea of this particular formula is that "when writing on a regicide case, if the duke's name was referred, [that means] the duke has no *dao* [and his murder was justified by his losing of *dao*]; if the minister's name was mentioned, [that means] the minister is guilty for this crime."[3] Du Yu's subcommentary to this goes: "by mentioning the duke's name, it means that in the *Annals* only was the duke's name referred to, this means the duke was

[1] Ibid.
[2] Ibid, p. 3.
[3] Li Xueqin (ed.) *Shisanjing zhushu, Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhengyi* (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1995), p. 235.

executed by his people; in turn it means he was abandoned by his state; by mentioning the name of the minister, it means the one who committed regicide was [guilty for this crime and] singled out to the later generation for his unrighteousness."[1]

To argue with Zuo's commentary and Du Yu's subcommentary, Wang Ruoxu makes a maneuver, firstly, he tests Zuo's and Du's theory to the extreme by proposing that if their theory is valid, anyone can accuse his duke of "being without the *dao*" and legitimately kill him; but Wang stresses, the sage would not legitimise such crime, because, secondly, according to Mencius's reading, the *Annals* was written in order to deter usurpers and rebellious ministers.[2] Thirdly, Wang probes into the inconsistency of the Classics and the three commentaries (i.e. Zuo's, Gongyang's and Guliang's commentaries). The inconsistency is that in the *Annals*, regarding Duke Dao of Xu's death, it was said that he was killed by the heir apparent, but the commentaries all say that the heir apparent did not taste the medication prepared for the king, but never physically killed the king. Wang pointed out that if we were to believe the three commentaries, we would end up agreeing that Confucius was too harsh, too strict and too demanding, and the whole *Annals* would go astray and even go against *renqing*, the very concept that forms the undertones of the *Annals*.

A formula is used only for the standardization of writing format. Wang questioned this as a "formula", because the formats for recording the many cases of regicide in the *Annals* contradict each other. Furthermore, from a perspective of morality, regicide is simply too immoral to be standardized. An attempt to standardize regicide is tantamount to legitimising the violent crime and will not be tolerated in *Annals*, which is a book of moral teaching. Such a severe mistake, Wang believes, is deep enough to escape most scrutiny if scholars were to believe in the received commentaries blindly, without using

[1] Ibid, p. 235.
[2] *Mencius*, Book 3B:9. Mencius said: "Confucius completed the *Spring and Autumn Annals* and struck terror into the hearts of rebellious subjects and undutiful sons." In Lau's translation of *Mencius*, p. 73.

renqing as a conceptual tool. The challenge to this formula in the first place belonged to the scholarly sphere, but in an environment where Confucian intellectuality was heavily entangled with politics, it had implications for political stability. This is especially true for the Jin court, which was not unfamiliar with usurpations and bloody regicides. This way in reading Classics, especially the *Spring and Autumn Annals* was common among Song Confucians too.[1] Also, one reason which buttressed Wang to reject this formula was *renqing*.

Apart from the abovementioned case on history and politics, Wang used *renqing* to criticize the three commentaries in other areas. In the thirtieth year of Duke Xiang's reign, *Annals* recorded one case of conflagration in the state of Song, which caused Boji's death. [2] The three commentaries' reports are by and large the same: Boji's death was righteous and exemplary, since she forsook chances of survival on the grounds that women were taught to refrain from leaving their living room at night if their male attendants and chaperones were not around. Boji's chaperone was present but not her male attendants, and so she decided to be consumed by fire. Gongyang's and Guliang's commentaries took the laconic record in *Annals* as Confucius's praise given to Boji for being a worthy woman, but Wang, by satirizing Boji's stubbornness, chastised the authors of the Gongyang and Guliang commentaries for corrupting the sage's intention.

Wang's criticism relates the intention of the teaching Boji received and *renqing*, and he used *renqing* to compare the three commentaries' awkwardness in reading the tragedy. Wang Ruoxu based his argument on his analysis of the intention of the teaching and his reconstruction of that accident. His analysis on the intention was sophisticated. He cites Mencius's "stretching out a helping hand to the drowning sister-in-law"[3] and says "in case of emergency when one is by no means able to observe the teachings while

[1] Song Dingzong, *Chunqiu song xue fawei* (Taipei: Wenshizhe chubanshe, 1986), pp. 127-224, passim.
[2] Wang, *op. cit.*, p. 12, Li Xueqin (ed.) *Shisanjing zhushu, Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhengyi*, p. 433, 434.
[3] Lau (tr.) *Mencius*, p. 84.

solving the problem, it is better for him to use his discretion to weigh and decide which to do."[1] Wang does not mean that in an emergency, one is allowed to behave in an unprincipled way for one's own welfare and use "discretion" (*quan*) as an excuse to whitewash his inappropriate dealings. Wang somewhere makes a clear reference that "stretching out a helping hand to the drowning sister-in-law" is "*quan*" and is also prescribed by the rites (*li*), and the rites is a manifestation of *renqing*.[2] Wang notices "*quan*" twice in historical and Classical criticism, one in reading *Mencius* Book 4A: 17:[3]

> Mencius said: "it is prescribed by the rites that, in giving and receiving, man and woman should not touch each other, but in stretching out a helping hand to the drowning sister-in-law one uses one's discretion." Dongpo (Su Shi's style name) said: "To stretch out a helping hand to the drowning sister-in-law is (what is prescribed by the) rites too." This is the same as Li Taibo's interpretation. However, what Mencius said is that this is precisely (what is prescribed by the) rites, but in occasions one has to use one's discretion (to make decisions in doing). Did Mencius mean that using one's discretion (to decide what to do) is not (what is prescribed by the) rites?
>
> 孟子曰："男女授受不親，禮也；嫂溺援之以手者，權也。"東坡曰："嫂溺援之，亦禮也。"與李泰伯之說同。夫孟子雲此固正禮，然有時從權耳，豈謂權即非禮乎？

Another example is in Wang's reading of the *Analects*.[4] Wang concurs with Li Qingchen's reading of *quan*, that discretion is congruent with *dao*. Therefore the argument follows in this way: if Boji was able to use her discretion to decide that her

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[1] Wang, *op. cit.*, p. 12.
[2] Wang relates *li* ritual to *renqing*, see Wang Ruoxu, *op. cit.*, p. 21, 23.
[3] Wang, ibid, p. 99.
[4] Wang, ibid, p. 66. Verse 9: 30, 31 in *The Analects*, cf. D. C. Lau (tr.), *The Analects* (London: Penguin Books, 1979), p. 100.

action would not be different from “stretching out a helping hand to the drowning sister-in-law”, which is “prescribed by the rites”, it is definitely acceptable. Because the rites are a manifestation of *renqing*, Boji’s deeds should be close to *renqing* and in turn be justified by *renqing*. Therefore Wang’s analysis of the intention of teaching of women’s conduct concludes with *renqing*. His reconstruction provides reasonable proof of his criticism to Gongyang and Guliang, since both commentaries reported the presence of a certain official (*you si*), and this official would be sufficient to give testimony on Boji’s chastity if she left her living room under the threat of fire even without a male attendant. Boji’s unwise attachment of herself to the literality of the teaching is lamentable, and Gongyang’s and Guliang’s commentaries are detestable, since they promote such stupidity as worthy and attribute this spurious appraisal to the sage, therefore corrupting the sage’s teaching to such an extent. Wang concludes:[1]

> Alas, the master’s central and constant teaching (*zhong yong zhi jiao*) is as bright as the sun, as flat as a wide road, but people always take those affected and difficult deeds and conduct that are far away from *renqing* as commendable. Isn’t it strange!
>
> 嗚呼，夫子中庸之教，郎如白日，坦于夷塗，而世每以矯拂難行，不近人情爲奇節，不亦異乎！

So, compared with the principles of the sage’s teaching, the three commentaries, particularly Gongyang and Guliang’s explanation on this tragedy, are unwise (*yu*) and uninitiated (*lou*), and far away from *renqing*.

Wang in the first two *juan* of his *bianhuo* series makes an effort to give a critical evaluation on the received commentary tradition. He was not the first generation of scholars to do so; by his time, the received commentary tradition had been subjected to

[1] Wang, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

skepticism for more than a century. This trend can be traced back to mid-Tang, but it was promoted by Ouyang Xiu during the mid-eleventh century.[1] The skepticism which developed in Northern Song was not intended to nullify the commentary tradition in general. Ouyang Xiu, as shown in Van Zoeren's study, justified the received tradition as what "provided the only link with the original, authentic understandings of the Classics" after Warring States and Qin's bibliocaust, and it was "in large correct" because it was from "collective wisdom" that "the received tradition […] represented a collective accomplishment of the kind that no single intelligence could hope to duplicate or to do without." However, one should not follow the received commentary in a slavish manner, because it is deeply flawed and required revision.[2] Ouyang's stance toward the received commentarial tradition prefigured the "breakdown of exegetical authority" at the advent of critical examination. His stance came to the fore and was spread by the generation after Ouyang, epitomized by the Cheng and Su brothers, in whose writings "we find an attempt to formulate a hermeneutic of the classics that largely dispensed with the guidance of traditional exegetical authority."[3]

Therefore, if we perceive the received commentary from the point of view of a twelfth century Confucian, this received commentarial tradition serves two contradictory functions in the learning of the sage's teaching. First, it facilitates his understanding of text written in archaic and cryptic language by providing supplementary materials, linguistic guides and glossaries; second, it distances readers from the sage by substituting the sage's intention with commentator's understanding. The pros and cons of the received commentary did not leave scholars with too much headache; Song scholars tackled this situation by applying the principle of "*sola scriptura*", not unlike reformer theologians in

[1] James T. C. Liu, *Ou-yang Hsiu: an eleventh-century neo-Confucianist*, pp. 90-92.
[2] Van Zoeren, *Poetry and Personality* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), p. 185-7.
[3] Ibid, pp. 191, 2.

Reformation.[1] By approaching the Classics directly, Neo-Confucians ventured to identify themselves as candidates of sagehood rather than students of the commentary tradition,[2] this development was epitomized in "the hermeneutics of the Cheng Brothers and Zhu Xi", which "was premised on the belief that they were engaged in a rediscovery and recovery of meaning and intention, as disclosed in scripture, that had long been inaccessible."[3]

Neo-Confucianism at Wang Ruoxu's time had not achieved an overwhelming ascendance, especially after the defeat and retreat of the Song state in Northern China, which was still a stronghold for Classics learning. Wang Ruoxu was aware of the skepticism, but in his writing we can see his attitude to the pre-Song commentarial tradition was impartial. He was not reluctant in giving due credit to "old interpretations", i.e. Han-Tang glossarial materials; while at occasions when he sees something wrong, his criticism is sharp. For example, in "Biao ji" section of *Record of Rites*, Han glossators' interpretation made Wang "burst into laughter", and such mistakes, Wang satirizes, "can be pointed out by little kids".[4]

However, the biggest problem of this tradition, Wang Ruoxu perceived, was that from the time of compilation of the three commentaries, too many commentators smuggled their own readings into the commentarial tradition, and worse than that, these interpretations were all attributed to the sage and worthies.[5] So the whole commentarial tradition was like a mine field and nobody could ensure himself to be free from a wrong step. Unless a feasible way was discovered, the commentarial tradition might be highly dangerous for any student of the sage. But if one were to know the way to tell the correct commentary from the corrupted, it would be great. So Wang's suggestion was:

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[1] Makeham, *Transmitters and Creators*, p. 174.
[2] Makeham, *Transmitters and Creators*, p. 176, Bol, *"This Culture of Ours"*, p. 340.
[3] Makeham, *Transmitters and Creators*, p. 188.
[4] Wang, *op. cit.* p. 22.
[5] Wang, ibid, p. 25.

> Those who were born thousands years after sage's demise have no chance to meet the sage personally for verification, so what they can do is nothing more than to make sure (their understandings) fit the principles and are congruent to normality of *renqing*.
>
> 士生千載之後，不獲親見聖人，是非真僞無從而質之，則亦求乎義理之安，而合乎人情之常而已。

Wang's evaluation of the commentary tradition was not his attempt to "topple the giants" like Zheng Xuan and Du Yu, as thought by Bol,[1] but I think was more like his practice on his version of "how to read". That is, to understand the Classics by understanding *renqing* that was shared by sage and the people of ancient and modern times. This understanding of *renqing* was not unique to Wang. In Su Shi's writing, Virag noticed "that emotions represented a level of experience shared by all people, they could show how shared judgments about right and wrong, good and bad, emanated from within rather than being imposed from without. They could thus constitute an important basis for a theory of ethics."[2]

Correcting the three errors of Song Confucians

Renqing is a meaningful factor to consider when solving the problems of reading and understanding Classics, especially when one reads the *Analects*. The problem is the impossibility of having authentic interpretation of the very author, the sage, during one's reading.[3] What the author can give is nothing more than the text of the Classics. How can a valid understanding be possible? Wang Ruoxu proposes two factors; one is the natural

[1] Bol, "Seeking common ground", p. 519.
[2] Virag, *op. cit.*, p. 262.
[3] Wei-chieh Lin, "A hermeneutic interpretation of the *Mencius* by Zhu Xi", Chun-chieh Huang, Gregor Paul and Heiner Roetz (ed.), *The Book of Mencius and its reception in China and Beyond* (Harrassowitz Verlag, Wiesbaden, 2008), 37-53.

intelligibility of the language of Classics, the other is the commentary tradition. Wang noticed that:

> Students should exercise caution in accepting peculiar theories that are not from *Odes, Book of Documents, Spring and Autumn Annals,* the *Analects* and *Mencius,* and are not congruent to *renqing*, even if the authorship of such theories were to the sage and worthies.[1]
>
> 世之學者，自非《詩》、《書》、《易》、《春秋》、《語》、《孟》之正經，一切異說，不近人情者，雖托以聖賢，皆當慎取，不可輕信也。

The language of the Classics conveying the sage's idea is self-explanatory and naturally intelligible; Wang noticed that:[2]

> The words of the sage were nothing more than *renqing*, this is why the words are clear, easy to understand, and centered on the mean and enduring.
>
> 聖人之言亦人情而已，是以明白而易知，中庸而可久。

This made proper understanding of the sage's message a practice of balancing between two moods of reading: reading by following the text strictly, and reading through the lines. A reader has to poise carefully, because:[3]

> The sage's ideas are not exhausted by language, but they also cannot be pursued outside of language. Since they are not exhausted by language, [if one] hold fast the language in order to understand the ideas, surely he would not understand the idea thoroughly. Because the ideas cannot be pursued outside of language, [if one] went beyond the language to search for the sage's ideas, of course he would be wrong in over-interpreting.

[1] Wang, *op. cit.* p. 211.
[2] Wang, *op. cit.*, p. 34.
[3] Ibid, p. 33.

夫聖人之意或不盡于言，亦不外乎言也。不盡于言而執言以求之，宜其失之不及也；不外乎言而離言以求之，宜其傷于太過也。

Second is the commentary. An interesting distinction was used in Wang's classification of the commentary tradition. He labeled pre-Song, mainly Han and Tang commentaries as "old interpretations" and Northern and Southern Song commentaries as "new interpretations".[1] Wang acknowledges that the commentary tradition supplements our reading, and highly praises Song Confucians' effort in elucidating the subtlety, examining the complexity of profitability and righteousness, and comprehending the feasibility of certain expediency in occasional circumstances. In these areas, the Song Confucians discovered issues neglected by former commentators.[2]

However, for Wang, both the old and new were not adequate in providing a satisfactory reading of the *Analects*. What was the problem? Wang pointed out that "old interpretations are wrong in being inadequate in explanation, while new interpretations are wrong in being over-explaining."[3] And it is more important to deal with the Song Confucians' errors, since the old interpretation's inadequacies were by and large corrected by Song Confucians, but whose errors were not treated yet. Song Confucians' errors were diverse, but not incorrigible. The question goes on, what is the etiology of these errors? Wang answers: They left the language of the text far behind and thrust into realms beyond the text: this is a method guaranteed to lose the point and to be wrong by over-interpretation. The symptoms are manifested by the three errors of being "overly profound, lofty and generous". The most important usage of *renqing* is to correct the fallacies Song Confucians made in their commentaries on the *Analects*, and we may say that all the six *juan* of *Lunyu bian huo* were aimed to supplement and correct the new

[1] Ibid, p. 33.
[2] Ibid, p. 33.
[3] Ibid, p. 33.

interpretations in the light of *renqing*. In the following part, I will examine Wang's treatment on the three errors to shed some light on his understanding of *renqing* in reading the *Analects* and Song Confucians theories, especially those in Zhu Xi's synthesis.

Error type one: Being overly profound

Being overly profound indicates the affected profundity Song scholars imposed on the deeds and speeches of Confucius.[1] Song scholars were intentionally making profound explanations on certain topics, for instance, human nature, the Way, Confucian lineage or intellectual tradition, and some abstract things, like spirits and ghosts.[2]

In the case of human nature and the Way, the Song Neo-Confucians including the Cheng brothers, Zhu Xi and Zhang Shi all took them as things which were necessary to know about, but Ouyang Xiu once declined and wrote that "the sage was not exhaustive in explaining the nature, or he did some research but did not dwell in it. Scholars should concentrate on concrete human affairs; nature, providences etc. are not our urgent business."[3] Wang Ruoxu cited this paragraph in his *bianhuo* on the *Analects*, in which entry he notes that scholars should "estimate their moral and physical capability in order to ask pointed questions and contemplate imminent things," because this way of learning was "the starting point of Confucius's and Mencius's teaching", and he admonished the contemporaries to be "constrained a little bit; it is better to err in being constrained than in being pretentious, it is better humiliating oneself than boasting (in claiming one's capacity and correctness in understanding sage's message)."[4]

By being overly profound, scholars assigned some ungrounded significances to the sage's speeches and deeds, aimed to make the sage's every verbal and behavioral

[1] Ibid, pp. 34, 35.
[2] Ibid, p. 35.
[3] Ibid, p. 56.
[4] Ibid, p. 56.

activity a manifestation of the Way. These scholars erred in stretching the sage's meanings to irresponsible extremes, distorting it with being "presumptuously incredible" (妄) and usurping the sage's imperatives by claiming the sage's intention is so and so. For example, in one occasion in the *Analects* 11: 12, Zilu asked about the way to serve deities and ghosts. Confucius did not tell him how to do so but gave him rhetorical interrogations instead. Song Confucians, Wang Ruoxu noticed, interpreted Confucius's interrogations as "the so-called 'did-not-tell' is actually 'did-tell-thoroughly'". Wang considers Confucius's usual teaching practice and raises doubts, "I am afraid that the sage did not mean this [as Song Confucians' understanding], the sage would not make such a twist, considering Zilu's intelligence."[1] Song Confucians thought Confucius to be full of sophistication, and thought that his every utterance was with profound significance. This was simply not the case, and insisting so is losing the point. Wang pointed out that the reason Song Confucians made this mistake is that they forgot teachings of Confucius and Mencius on how to commence one's learning journey. At the outset of one's learning journey, Wang reminds, one should know his capacity, ask relevant questions and reflect things at hand, but should not indulge himself in fanciful theories and unfathomable philosophy. "It is more acceptable to be wrong in being restrained than being incredulous, it is better for one to be in a humiliating position than be presumptuous."[2] By saying so, Wang is suggesting a possible way to avoid the mistake of being overly profound by not being afraid to focus on mundane issues, for example, human affairs.[3] Here Wang tries to

[1] Ibid, p. 71.
[2] Ibid, p. 56.
[3] Here it is not my intention to say that Song Confucians, especially Southern Song Neo-Confucians, were not interested in such human affair issues. Their efforts in managing human affairs were exceptional. What I understand is that Wang Ruoxu's intention is that human affairs have higher priority, vis-à-vis philosophical issues, e.g. nature, the mandate. Chen Zhaoyang in his study on Jin Confucians noticed that Jin scholar-officials did not show much interest in the philosophy of Neo-Confucianism, but were interested in whether Neo-Confucianism could provide them with a systematic interpretation of their practical affairs, e.g. Chen Zhaoyang, *Zhengfu wangchao xia de shiren: Jindai Hanzu shiren de zhengzhi, shehui, wenhua lunxi*, (Ph. D. Thesis, National Tsing Hwa University, 2007).

correct Song Confucians' error by counterbalancing their emphasis on philosophical issues like nature, the Way of heaven with his emphasis on *renqing*.

One entry in Zhang Jiucheng's reading of Book 10 of the *Analects* was cited twice as the exemplar of being presumptuously profound.[1] Zhang's position was that "Confucius's mind can be found in 'Xiang Dang', implementations of Confucius's mind are in *Spring and Autumn Annals*, if one does not learn 'Xiang Dang', he can by no means understand the implementations in *Annals*, if he does not learn *Annals*, he will not be able to appreciate the spirit of 'Xiang Dang'."[2] Wang noticed Zhang's implication was that " 'Xiang Dang' and *Spring and Autumn Annals* are supplementary to each other",[3] and this was an attempt to catapult "Xiang Dang", a chapter in the *Analects* recording Confucius's daily activities at home, e.g. culinary preferences, conducts at ceremonies and attending local cults etc, to a philosophical and ethical plane whereon rests the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. For Wang Ruoxu, this was a case of being pretentiously profound, and the result of this mistake was that Zhang was going against *renqing*. Zhang Jiucheng in "Xiang Dang tong lun" (a general discussion on "Xiang Dang") in an abstruse and abstract tone, related Confucius's speeches and conduct with Heaven, he wrote:[4]

> Confucius's conducts are heavenly. In the form of sound, seen from his gait, instantiated in his garments, manifested in his resting, observed from his viand, [these aspects in Confucius's daily life] are nothing but heaven. Given the Supreme Being lived in human world; it would not be different from [the manner] Confucius [lives].
>
> 夫子之動也天，其發于音聲，見于步趨，形于衣服，著于寢處，具于飲食，無非天也。雖使皇天上帝，居處人間，亦不過如夫子而已。

[1] Wang, *op. cit.*, p. 35, 67.
[2] Ibid, p. 36, note 1.
[3] Ibid, p. 35, 67.
[4] Zheng Jiucheng, "Xiang Dang tong lun", *Hengpu ji*, (Wenyuange Siku quanshu), pp. 325-6.

It was a common practice to relate Confucius with supernatural beings or claim Confucius as having supernatural traits in apocryphal works,[1] but by Song times, the credibility of these works was starting to collapse.[2] Zhang Jiucheng's writing in "Xiang Dang tong lun" sounds like a violation of a reasonably acceptable understanding of the sage, who is a human being in the first place. Wang explicates in his criticism that "people like Zhang Jiucheng ostentatiously bragged about the sages and tried to superscribe the sage but did not know their faults, and erred to the extreme of saying that 'Xiang Dang' is supplementing *Spring and Autumn Annals*; how far this goes astray from *renqing*! How can this be credible?"[3]

Another example in this category of being overly profound is Song Confucians' understanding of the final book in the *Analects*, "Yao Yue", which is characterized by flawed text and perplexing language. However, Wang points out, "scholars of the school of the Way made verbose explanations on the significance of this book and took them as subtle and profound messages from the sage," insisting that this section depicts the intellectual lineage of the sage's learning, and contains the gist of the whole *Analects*. [4] Wang Ruoxu noticed that Su Shi took this book as a flawed text, a concoction of pieces from the *Book of Documents*, and believed Su's awareness of the fact that there were textually corrupted, and even totally distorted books among the bequeathed works of Confucius. Wang praised Su's understanding pertaining to *renqing*.[5] Why does Wang think so? Su's original comment is no longer extant, but a brief excerpt in *Sishu huo wen* reads:[6]

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[1] Zhou Yutong, "Chenwei zhong de Kong sheng he ta de mentu", Zhu Weizheng (ed.), *Zhou Yutong jingxueshi lunzhu xuanji* (Shanghai: Shanghai remin chubanshe, 1996), pp. 292-321.
[2] For instance, Ouyang Xiu memorized the throne to expunge apocryphal works cited in the sanctioned commentaries for the Five Classics (*Wu Jing zhengyi*), see Liu Zijian, *Ouyang Xiu de zhixue yu congzheng*, (Hong Kong: Xinya yanjiusuo, 1963), p. 59.
[3] Wang, *op. cit.*, p. 67.
[4] Ibid, p. 35.
[5] Ibid, p. 95.
[6] Ibid, p. 94-5. cf. Zhu Xi, *Sishu huo wen* (Taipei: Taiwen Commercial Press, 1983) v. 197, pp. 518-9.

> Su doubted this chapter and said "it is a concoction of 'Da Yu mo', 'Tang gao', 'Tai shi', 'Wu cheng', it is textually perverted and therefore has no way to be restored. From this chapter we can induce that the *Analects* contains unreadable and misarranged books bequeathed from Confucius."
>
> 東坡謂："其雜取《禹谟》、《湯诰》、《泰誓》、《武成》之文，而顛倒失次，不可複考。蓋孔子之遺書，編簡絕亂，有不可知者。"

Wang's reference of Su Shi contrasts with Yang Shi's comments on the Book 20:[1]

> In this final book, [Confucius] recorded down Yao's instruction to Shun, the intention and the points that can be used in society in the harangues of King Tang [of Shang] and King Wu [of Zhou], so as to thoroughly illuminate the genealogy of the sage's learning, therefore to make the significance of the whole twenty books clear.
>
> 終篇具載堯舜咨命之言，湯武誓師之意，與夫施諸政事者，以明聖學之所傳者，一于是而已。

Yang Shi was trying to argue that Book 20 "Yao Yue" is an integral part of and a cogent synopsis of the *Analects*. But Su Shi's observation was based on the imperfect condition of the text. Wang's commend on Su Shi pertaining *renqing* can be understood as Wang's appraisal of Su Shi's attitude to the Classics and the sage's message. Su refrained from philosophization and over-interpretation of this flawed text, in contrast with "the scholars of Daoxue" (*Daoxue zhu gong*, a term used by Wang Ruoxu to refer Neo-Confucians, e.g. the Cheng Brothers, Yang Shi, Zhang Shi and Zhu Xi etc.) who worked so hard, dug so deep into the text in order to get the "profound meaning of the sage's subtle words."[2] In

[1] Zhu Xi (ed.), *Si Shu zhangju jizhu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), p. 194.
[2] Wang, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

other words, those who erred in being overly profound were unaware of the importance of *renqing* in reading Classics.

Error type two: Being overly lofty

The problem of being overly lofty in Song Confucians' reading of the *Analects* caused some troubles. According to Wang Ruoxu, their philosophization and moralization of Confucius's pedagogical expediencies in instructing people with lesser capacity precluded these people from being possibly educated.[1] Wang's practical concern was that Confucius occasionally used tangible material rewards, either in monetary terms or in other form, as incentives to "entice" lesser-capable people to learn the heavenly principle. The sage had by no means tied his mind unto materiality; the tangible incentives were nothing more than Confucius's pedagogical devices, which showed the openness and catholicity of the sage's teaching to people of varied intelligence. Song Confucians, however, denied such a possibility. For example, in the *Analects* 2: 18, Zizhang wanted to learn to work in bureaucracy to gain salary. Wang read Confucius's teaching on how to work in bureaucracy in order to earn salary as a means to guide Zizhang to think in terms of righteousness. This reading was opposite to Zhang Jiucheng's understanding that "there is no such thing as working for salary in the sage's school."[2] Another case is Zhang Shi's doubt about whether Confucius's teaching to Ju Boyu is the sage's genuine intention, which Wang sees as ungrounded and erred in being overly lofty.[3] Confucius commended on Ju Boyu:[4]

> How gentlemanly Ju Boyu is! When the Way prevails in the state he takes office, but when the Way falls into disuse in the state he allows himself to be furled and put away safely.

[1] Ibid, p. 35.
[2] Ibid, p. 35.
[3] Ibid, p. 35.
[4] Lau (tr.), *The Analects*, p. 133.

君子哉蘧伯玉！邦有道，則仕；邦無道，則可卷而懷之。

Zhang Shi commented that Ju's conduct was not as good as Confucius thought. Zhang Shi elevated the standard for being recognized as "gentleman", and his standard was so high that even someone like Ju Boyu, who was deemed as "gentleman" by Confucius, could hardly reach it. This was a mistake that deconstructed the possibility of being good. This kind of mistake was caused by their over-reading; they aimed to make their theories lofty so as to be attractive, but they overlooked the fact that the meaningfulness of interpretation was not in making lofty theories but in obtaining the reality of the sage's message. If theories were made fanciful at the expense of the reality of the sage's message, Wang asks, could they be cherished?[1]

In these cases, occasional utterances of the sage's practical concerns were deemed as unauthentic, or were subjected to the ethical scrutiny of Song Confucians' "modern reconstruction". Song Confucians tended to treat the sage's speeches and deeds as ethical norms, if they did not look normative, Song Confucians would either deny them, or problematize them to their advantage. Such mistakes could only be corrected by applying *renqing* in reading.

Error type three: Being overly generous

In one case in the *Analects*, Zigong asked Confucius about contemporary politicians, whom Confucius referred to as "*dou shao zhi ren*", people with lesser capacity (literally, people with a capacity of a bucket).[2] Zhang Jiucheng read this sarcastic remark as the sage's self-reference. He cited one sentence from *Xun Zi*: "according to ritual, living in this country, one should not criticize the high officials"[3] to argue that referring to himself as a person with little capacity, Confucius was discouraging Zigong to talk about those in

[1] Wang, *op. cit.*, p. 34.
[2] Lau (tr.), *The Analects*, p. 122.
[3] Xun Kuang, Wang Tianhai (ed.) *Xunzi jiao shi* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1985), p. 1131.

power.[1] Zhang Jiucheng's message was clear: Confucius should be a person free of any flaw by whatever standard. Therefore Zhang did not interpret derogatory remarks (if any) in the *Analects* literally, but analogically, e.g. as a self humiliating reference to stop an inappropriate conversation, or in some meaningful and heuristic way. Some other Song scholars shared this opinion. Wang noticed this problem in Fan Zuyu (courtesy name: Chunfu) who tried to make Confucius's reprimand of Yuan Rang sound more meaningful and instructive. In the *Analects* 14, it is recorded that:[2]

> Yuan Rang sat with his legs spread wide. The Master said, "To be neither modest nor deferential when young, to have passed on nothing worthwhile when grown up, and to refuse to die when old, that is what I call a pest". Saying so, the Master tapped him on the shin with his stick.
>
> 原壤夷俟。子曰："幼而不孫弟，長而無述焉，老而不死，是爲賊。"以杖叩其胫。

Fan read Confucius's gesture to Yuan Rang as the way his instructions tailored to accommodate Yuan's learning ability.[3] Whoever "had no sense of courtesy cannot be instructed by words, therefore [Confucius] reprimanded and tapped him with a stick. [Doing so was because the sage's] method of instruction is not the only one". But Wang Ruoxu does not agree with Fan. Fan's explanation does not match Confucius's words to Yuan Rang, and makes Confucius irrational.

Wang argues against Zhang Jiucheng in the aforementioned case, in that: first, Zhang used supportive materials from *Xun Zi*, which might not necessarily have been the case in the sage's circle, and second, the derogatory remarks Confucius used on his disciples when talking about those in government were the "true words" (“真实言语”

[1] Wang, *op. cit.*, p. 76.
[2] Lau (tr.), *The Analects*, p. 131, with modification.
[3] Zhu Xi (ed.), *Lun Meng jingyi* (Taipei: Taiwan Commercial Press, 1983), v. 198, p. 333. Fan's comment is not in the later edition of Zhu Xi's *Lunyu zhangju jizhu*.

zhen shi hua yu) between a master and a disciple. The implication of the second point was that to understand the contentious paragraph, one should consider the real situation in which the interlocution had taken place so as to determine how possible it was for Confucius to have actually said so. Wang contended that:

> Anyone who has preference certainly has dislikes, fondness, anger, commendations, and criticisms. How can be the sage be different? But the scholars always think of the sage to be like breeze in spring and be in harmony with anything; they would cover up and round up any of the sage's harsh criticism, satire and condemnation.[1]
>
> 凡人有好則有惡，有喜則有怒，有譽則有毀。聖人亦何以異哉？而學者一以春風和氣期之，凡忿疾譏斥之辭必周遮護諱而爲之說。

Wang disagrees with Zhang Jiucheng and redirects the readers' attention to the specific situation by referring to Su Shi's reading. Su thought the referent in Zigong and Confucius was a particular minister, albeit whose identity was concealed in the conversation. It must have been a particular one, inasmuch as it was impossible to regard every politician as "*doushao zhi ren*". Compared to Zhang Jiucheng's understanding, Wang Ruoxu takes Su's as reasonable.[2] Zhang Jiucheng was wrong to neglect the real situation which was a casual talk between a master and a disciple and stuck to his own interpretation, or was probably astonished by Confucius's egregiously harsh remark and hastened to round it up. But, Wang asks, what damage on the sage's virtue could be done by saying so? And between a master and a disciple in a casual conversation, did they need to be so cautious? Zhang Jiucheng tried to safeguard Confucius from being accused of giving derogatory remarks about others, but this was what his error was - in being overly generous. People like Zhang Jiucheng took Confucius as extremely generous and

[1] Wang, *op. cit.*, p. 35.
[2] Ibid, p. 76.

deprived him of responses common to human beings, but how could the sage have been different in this respect?[1] Wang Ruoxu here does not echo an old debate of "whether the sage had emotions like other people" that attracted leading intellectuals during the Wei-Jin period,[2] but Wang believed the universality of *renqing* ensured the sage had human attributes. If one does not accept this point, the mistake of being overly generous is inevitable. Therefore Wang expects that the sage should not be excluded from the realm of affectivity, nor be extirpated from emotional responses, e.g. anger. Deeming or expecting the sage to be free of emotional responses is an error, and covering up such harsh remarks or making sophisticated defense is the same kind of error of being overly generous.

These mistakes prevent readers from knowing the reality of the sage. Since the *Analects* records the speeches of the sage, knowing how to decode the sage's speeches is the key to understanding the *Analects*. The key to a good understanding of the sage's meanings is the application of *renqing* in deciphering the sage's message. Wang Ruoxu in conclusion claims that "knowing about these three errors will reveal the sage's reality".[3] The question is: how do we know if there is an error? One should always keep *renqing* in mind when reading Confucius, and use *renqing* to gauge others' commentaries, lest one be misinformed.

Historical meaning and scriptural meaning

Wang Ruoxu's use of *renqing* as discussed in preceding parts is meant to minimize commentarial errors. However, a sound understanding of the Classics cannot be achieved by elimination of mistakes alone. If *renqing* can only be used to correct the wrongs, its significance in Wang's writing would be severely reduced. For Wang,

[1] Ibid, p. 35.
[2] Makeham, *Transmitters and creators*, p. 45.
[3] Wang, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

renqing has its epistemic advantage for understanding the Classics: the use of *renqing* is necessary to restore "historical meaning" and in turn to elicit reasonable "scriptural meaning",[1] in cases when Wang does not agree with the Song Confucians' "scriptural meaning". The overall evaluation Wang gives Southern Song Confucians' reading is that they are misted with over-interpretation, which distorts their understanding of scriptural meaning, and he sees their mistakes in comprehending the scriptural meaning as due to their negligence in pursuing "historical meaning".[2] Modern scholars may partially concur with Wang's observation on Southern Song Confucians', especially some Daoxue fellows' method in reading the Classics, as "Tao-hsueh adherents dehistoricized the Classics and the sages and resacrilized them."[3]

Wang saw that this had to be dealt with, and the first step was to restore historical meaning by introducing *renqing* in reading the Classics. The epistemic significance of *renqing* can be justified at two levels; at the basic level, it is shared by the ancients and moderns, so by understanding *renqing*, modern people can understand the thoughts and deeds of ancient people, and therefore have a better informed understanding of historical meaning, compared to relying on texts alone. On the other hand, *renqing* is grounded on instinct, a kind of inclination, a certain mental state before moralization and philosophization. *Renqing* facilitates an immediate[4] approach to the sage's subtle message, which was overlooked by philosophical and philological approaches. We can describe the issue as such: Wang's reference to *renqing* was meant to remind readers about the mindset of the ancient people and therefore to understand why ancient people behaved this way. In other words, Wang was asking his readers to use their own *renqing*

[1] I take Makeham's definition on the two concepts; cf. Makeham, *Transmitters and Creators*, p. 9.
[2] Wang, *op. cit.*, p. 56.
[3] Bol, *"This Culture of Ours"*, p. 388.
[4] The "immediate" sense is borrowed from Fuller, where "immediate" means "unmediated, what comes directly before the mind". See Michael A. Fuller, "Pursuing the Complete Bamboo in the Breast: Reflections on a Classical Chinese Image for Immediacy", *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 53, 1, (1996), p. 6.

to sympathize with the *renqing* of historical actors, so as to reconstruct the mentality of ancients, in order to understand their psychological setting (which cannot be understood by any other means) to get the sage's intended meaning manifested in the Classics, i.e. the "scriptural meaning".

Wang is conscious about preserving the historicity of Classics, because a concrete and correct historical meaning would prevent readers from liberal interpretation. His *renqing* is a feasible means to restore the history recorded in Classics. He tries to fix the reconstruction of historical settings of the actors' psychology and we may perceive his effort in directing readers' attention to ancient people's mentality. Take this entry in *Lunyu bian huo* as an example:

> "When Yan Yuan died, Yan Lu asked the master to give him his carriage to pay for an outer coffin for his son." […] Asking one's teacher for teacher's cart to afford his son's coffin, so doing failed to consider [the relationship of] oneself and the other party and failed to weight the appropriateness of this inquiry. This is untolerable. [Such request] should be rejected according to the intention of ritual and *renqing*.
>
> "顏淵死，顏路請子之車以爲之椁。"［……］以子之椁而奪師之車，其不量彼己，不識輕重，亦甚矣，在禮意人情，自當拒之。

In this paragraph, Wang Ruoxu introduced another concept, "intention of ritual" (*li yi*). In Wang's writing, ritual, however, predicates on *renqing*. On one occasion, he asserts that: [1]

> The sage made rituals; none of them were not made out of *renqing*.
>
> 聖人制禮，未嘗不出于人情。

Once more, he mentions: [2]

> The rituals are *renqing* and that's all.

[1] Wang, *op. cit.*, p. 21.
[2] Ibid, p. 23.

禮者，人情而已矣。

The first citation establishes theoretical linkage between ritual and *renqing*, which is quite pertaining to Su Shi's understanding elaborated in "Zhong yong lun", that ritual is formulated so as to give *renqing* formality to be expressed and realized. Therefore the intention of ritual here can be read as a re-emphasis of *renqing*.

Wang demonstrates in this entry how restoration of "historical meaning" can be achieved by applying *renqing*. "Historical meaning" refers to "the meaning of a text as composed by its original authors and/or its original audience."[1] In the *Analects* 11: 18, the original author and audience were Confucius and Yan Lu; their interaction was terse and poorly contextualized, and their conversation is subject to many possible interpretations. Later commentators like Su Shi had to make sense of this case by relating it to another occasion recorded in *Records of Rites* (Chapter "Tan gong"), and still some others, like Hu Yin, had to elaborate on the story based on Confucius's feedback to Yan Lu's request. His elaborations are hair-splitting: "in burial one may not need an outer coffin, a horse for driving carriage can be given out and purchased back, a [however] high ranking official should not walk on foot, the carriage as official accouterment cannot be given to others for selling in the market."[2]

Why is this so hair-splitting? Wang asks. What information a reader can clearly receive is that this interlocution is about Yan Yuan's funeral, and one should not take organizing an exequy as a reason to deprive others' property even for one's parent, to say even less for the younger generation.[3] Should not such requests be simply rejected? How can anyone ask his preceptor to sell the cart, part of his official accouterment, to buy the coffin for his departed son? Isn't Yen Lu's request going too far away from *renqing*, and

[1] Makeham, *Transmitters and creators*, p. 9.
[2] Wang, *op. cit.*, p. 70
[3] Ibid, p. 70.

becoming absurd, even unthinkable? From the historical meaning and reading from Confucius' feedback to Yan Lu, it is clear that the scriptural meaning was to conduct obsequies properly, so neither Su Shi's nor Hu Yin's scriptural meaning was totally valid.

In another case, historical meaning and scriptural meaning were again rescued by adhering to *renqing*. This case is about a thorny topic: the single thread that strings the sage's learning.[1] In *The Analects*, "single thread" appears twice, in 4:15 and 15:3:

4.15

子曰："參乎！吾道一以貫之。"曾子曰："唯。"子出。門人問曰："何謂也？"曾子曰："夫子之道，忠恕而已矣。"

The Master said, "Can! There is one single thread binding my way together."

Zeng Can assented.

After the Master had gone out, the disciples asked, "What did he mean?"

Zeng Can said, "The way of the Master consists in doing one's best and in using oneself as a measure to gauge others. That is all."[2]

15:3

子曰："賜也，女以予爲多學而識之者與？"對曰："然，非與？"曰："非也，予一以貫之。"

The Master said, "Ci, do you think that I am the kind of man who learns widely and retains what he has learned in his mind?"

"Yes, I do. Is it not so?"

"No. I have a single thread binding it all together."[1]

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[1] In the *Analects* 4: 15. This "single thread" hypothesis raised so much interest in East Asia Confucianism realms, not only among Chinese scholars, but also Japanese and Korean Confucians, who took great effort to tackle this issue, c.f. Huang Junjie, "Riben ruzhe dui *Lun yu* 'wu dao yi yi guan zhi' de quanshi", in Huang Junjie, *Dechuan riben* Lun yu *quanshi shi lun*, (Taipei: Taiwan daxue chuban zhongxin, 2006), pp. 227-259, and for a review on Wei-Jin scholars' contention, see Bryan W. Van Nordan, "Unwearing the 'one thread' of *Analects* 4: 15", Bryan W. Van Nordan (ed.), *Confucius and the* Analects*: New essays* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 216-236.

[2] Lau (tr.), *The Analects*, p. 74, with modification on names.

In discussions on verse 4:15, Wang agrees with Yang Shi, You Zuo[2] and a certain Zhou that in understanding Confucius's "single thread", one can not equal Confucius's "single thread" to Zengzi's "*zhong* and *shu*", but one should understand that Zengzi's "*zhong* and *shu*" was something Zengzi brought up for the disciples to practice, lest they mire in searching for the "single thread" in vain. Wang does not agree with some readers, who believed that Zengzi, because of the limitation of his insight, indeed reduced "single thread" to "*zhong* and *shu*".[3] In reading verse 15:3, some saw Zigong's learning as inferior to Zengzi, because the former's ensuring interrogation "is it not so?" betrayed Zigong's poor confidence in Confucius' caliber.[4] Without plunging into the debate, Wang approaches this issue again from the perspective of *renqing*. This time Wang cites Hong Mai's explanation on this topic as example of pursuing "historical meaning". Hong's interpretation goes: [5]

> 二子皆孔門高弟也。其聞言而唯，與夫聞而不複問，皆以默悟于言意之表矣。先儒所以卑子貢者，爲其先然夫子多學之旨耳。是殆不然。方聞聖言如是，遽應曰否，非弟子所以敬師之道，故對曰然，而繼之以非與之請，豈爲不能知乎？
>
> These two disciples (Zengzi, Zigong) were advanced learners in Confucius's circle. Upon hearing [the "single thread"] one (Zigong) said "Yes, I do" while the other (Zengzi) assented without any words, both comprehended [Confucius's] intended meaning from the language. Confucian scholars undervalued Zigong merely because that Zigong consented that Confucius is the kind of man who learns widely and retains what he has learned in his mind. This [undervaluation] is

[1] Ibid, p. 132.
[2] You Zuo's comments in Zhu Xi (ed.) *Lun Meng jingyi*, vol. 198, p. 94, Yang Shi's, in pp. 94-5.
[3] Wang, *op. cit.*, p. 50.
[4] Ibid, p. 51. Verse 15:3 cf. Lau (tr.), *The Analects*, p. 132.
[5] Hong Mai, *Rongzhai suibi*, v. 13, in Wang, *op. cit.*,, p. 51.

wrong. Suppose one said "No" to what he heard from the sage, this is not the way a disciple interact with his master. So Zigong said "Yes, I do" followed by asking "Is it not so", isn't he unable to know that ["single thread"]?

Hong Mai's notice on this occurrence was so highly applauded by Wang Ruoxu that the latter had to quote Hong's notice in length as an exemplary discourse based on thorough apprehension of *renqing*.[1]

Hong developed his argument in this way: both Zengzi and Zigong were advanced disciples in Confucius's circle, and they certainly understood Confucius's single thread. The reason scholars despised Zigong is that he thought that Confucius's sagacity is resulted from erudition and agreed with Confucius' self-revelation (which is not true, according to later scholars' consensus). However, think from Zigong's situation at that moment, as Hong noted, should a disciple negate his master's teaching off the cuff? This was not a respectful way to answer one's teacher, so Zigong answered yes, and then followed up with "is it not so?" to make a tacit inquiry to let Confucius expound on the topic. The thesis of Hong's argument was that the manner in which Zigong answered Confucius's question should have been respectful, and should have shown the student's due courtesy to the teacher. Hong's contextualization was made possible by probing the mentality of the actors and reestablishing the setting of the historical actors' circumstances. Although Wang Ruoxu does not give his scriptural meaning, based on Hong's reconstruction of historical meaning he nullifies the Cheng Brothers' and Xie's scriptural meanings as ungrounded exaggerations of the wonderfulness of "single thread".[2]

[1] Wang, *op. cit.*, p. 51.
[2] Ibid, p. 51.

Conclusion

Wang Ruoxu's *renqing* echoes Ouyang Xiu's and Su Shi's understanding. Ouyang believed that "the sage's speeches are not far from *renqing*".[1] Su Shi claimed that "considered from its roots, the Way of the sage entirely emerges from human feelings".[2] Wang makes an even bolder claim that "The words of the sage were nothing more than *renqing*."[3]

As with Ouyang Xiu, Wang Ruoxu does not show much interest in the inquiry of human nature and/or fate etc. He cites Ouyang's criticism to the vogue of searching for "nature and fate" in the sage's words.[4] In his preamble to *Lunyu bian huo*, Ye Shi's criticism on "contemporary Confucians" was quoted at length too.[5] Wang uses Ye's criticism to address the problems he saw from Song Confucians who "think they must talk of human nature and must definitely know destiny. All of them link their discussions to the Six Classics and the writings of Confucius. Using beautiful rhetoric and subtle, mysterious language, they confuse others by giving [them] no way to comprehend."[6] The contrast in preferring *renqing* or other philosophical concepts among Song Confucians was captured by Bol, who noticed that "[f]igures who claimed to be uninterested in cosmology and the natural process of heaven-and-earth and who rejected the idea of defining human nature in moral terms still sought to show that emotions […] could play a positive role in the organization of social life."[7] Wang was one of those in this group.

From the preceding discussions on the development of *renqing* in Confucian Classical studies, we may possibly read Wang's *renqing* as a re-discovery of Ouyang's

[1] Ouyang, *Ouyang Xiu quanji*, p. 210.
[2] Murck, "Shu Shih's reading of the *Chuong yung*", p. 277.
[3] Wang, *op. cit.*, p. 34.
[4] Ibid, p. 56.
[5] Ibid, p. 33.
[6] Ibid, p. 33. Translation as in Tillman, "Confucianism under the Chin and the impact of Sung Tao-hsueh", p. 97.
[7] Bol, *Neo-Confucianism in Chinese History*, p. 71.

idea in an historical setting that was different from Ouyang, but as an emergence in the contemporary cultural tradition with the urgency of justifying one's position. Such an emergency came from a predicament faced by Wang and his contemporary Jin Confucians, in securing a position in the "mainstream of Chinese tradition" of their own culture.[1] Classical studies, in the form of critical essays on commentaries, was Wang's way of establishing himself within the cultural tradition, and *renqing* is a central theme in his studies.

[1] Tillman, "Confucianism under the Chin and the impact of Sung Tao-hsueh", p. 96.

CHAPTER THREE

THE TEACHING OF "YI YI NI ZHI" IN WANG'S CRITICAL ESSAYS

"*Yi yi ni zhi*" in the commentarial tradition from Han to Song

"Using one's sympathetic understanding to receive the intention" (*yi yi ni zhi*, 以意逆志) is an important concept in Confucian learning. It is a hermeneutic principle in the Confucian project of understanding Classics, the sage and ancient people. This concept has received scholarly notice in recent years.[1] Recent studies have focused on the debate over the nature of the components of this concept, including "sympathetic understanding" (*yi*) and "intention" (*zhi*). The ongoing discussion over the nature of these ideas from Mencius to the Qing scholar Wu Qi (吴淇) has been carefully scrutinized and so far we have a relatively clear picture about the development and application of this theory in ancient China.

However, researchers have been mainly focusing on quite a few representative figures and commentators: Mencius, Zhao Qi (趙岐), Zhu Xi and to a lesser extent, Wu Qi. There has been little attention paid to anyone in between them. One would like to ask: Has anyone developed or used this concept in learning and reading? It is also necessary to check how others understood and applied it in different contexts and for various purposes.

Reading through Wang Ruoxu's critical essays, one can find out that this concept appeared a number of times in Wang Ruoxu's writings and constitutes his methodology of reading the Classics. In his preamble to his writings on *Mengzi bianhuo*, Wang pointed

[1] Zhou Guangqing, *Zhongguo gudian jieshixue daolun* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2002), pp. 345-362; Huang Junjie, "Mengzi yunyong jingdian de mailuo jiqi jiejing fangfa", Li Minghui (ed.), *Rujia jingdian yu quanshi fangfa* (Shanghai: Huadong Shifan daxue chubanshe, 2008), pp. 124-136; Wei-chieh Lin, "A Hermeneutic Interpretation of the *Mencius* by Zhu Xi", Chun-chieh Huang, Gregor Paul and Heiner Roetz (ed.), *The Book of Mencius and its Reception in China and Beyond*, (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2008), pp. 37-53; Lin Weijie, "Zhiren lunshi yu yi yi ni zhi – Zhu Xi dui 'Mengzi Wanzhang' pian de liangxiang jieshi yuanze de quanshi xue", *Zhongguo wenzhe yanjiu jikan*, 32 (2008), pp. 109-130.

out that some Song scholars misunderstood *Mencius* because of their failure in applying this concept. Wang then mooted this concept in order to facilitate a meaningful understanding of Mencius, and to correct former scholars' misrepresentations. He noticed that Song scholars were inept in making sense of some sections in *Mencius*, because of the nature of the text, characterized as a variegation of different styles of speeches and a collection of teachings in different situations, with abundant use of rhetoric devices, making it difficult for readers to understand thoroughly.[1]

Apart from reading Mencius, contemporary scholars were also easily misted by the words of the sage in *The Analects*;[2] especially for those who excessively relied on the literal meanings of texts. To correct the mistakes and provide readers with a reliable method of reading and understanding difficult sentences and opaque languages in the Classics, on many occasions in his critical essays, Wang explicates the importance of "using one's sympathetic understanding to receive the intention" and demonstrates the way it can be applied. In this chapter, I will first summarize the ongoing discussion on the concept of Mencius, Zhao Qi and Zhu Xi to illustrate the development of this concept before Wang's time. Then, I will make a thorough examination of Wang's understanding and application of this idea, so as to explore another aspect of Wang's scholarly enterprise. In the last section I will compare and contrast Wang's understanding to the Song Confucians' in order to shed some light on reading Song-Jin-Yuan intellectual history.

To avoid the awkwardness one may easily discover in using the bulky phrase "to use one's sympathetic understanding to receive the intention", and also for the sake of convenience, in the following parts I would use its non-translated form "*yi yi ni zhi*".

[1] Wang, *op. cit.*, p. 96.
[2] Wang, ibid, p. 41.

Mencius, Zhao Qi and Zhu Xi

"*Yi yi ni zhi*" is the method Mencius proposed for reading the *Odes*. In *Mencius* Book 9, there is recorded a conversation between Mencius and Xianqiu Meng, allegedly a disciple. Xianqiu when reading *Odes* encountered certain lines which were hard to reconcile with the propriety due ruler-minister relationship, and he raised this to Mencius. Mencius went through the lines with historical evidence and textual substantiation to clarify the doubts, and asserted that there was no discrepancy in the social etiquette, one may receive from these lines if Xianqiu has put the stanza he quoted back to the context of the whole ode. Mencius concluded his teaching by the famous caveat, which goes: [1]

> Hence in explaining an ode, one should not allow the words to get in the way of the sentence, nor the sentence to get in the way of the intention. The right way is to meet the intention of the poet with sympathetic understanding.
>
> 故說《詩》者，不以文害辭，不以辭害志，以意逆志，是爲得之。

From Mencius's discourse, one can discern four items: *wen*, *ci*, *yi*, and *zhi*. Their relationship can be illustrated as such: *wen* (words) may become an obstacle to approaching the *ci* (sentences) and in turn *ci* to *zhi* (intention), which should be perceived by the assistance of *yi* (sympathetic understanding). On the nature of the four, there are

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[1] This is D. C. Lau's translation of *Mencius*, p. 104 with minor modification. Some other translations are:
Iren Bloom's translation of *Mencius*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), p. 102.

> "[I]n explaining an ode, one should not use a word to distort a phrase, nor use a phrase to distort the overall intent. If one thinks about understanding the intent, one will get it."

Legge's translation, in *The Four Books: Confucian Analects, The Great Learning, The Doctrine of the Mean, and the Works of Mencius*, (New York: Paragon Book Reprint Corp., 1966), pp. 788-789.

> "Therefore, those who explain the odes may not insist on one term so as to do violence to the general scope. They must try with their thoughts to meet that scope, and then we shall apprehend it."

Van Zoeren's translation, in *Poetry and Personality*, *op. cit.*, p. 70:

> "Thus those who speak of the Odes should not let their literary qualities [*wen*] harm the [plain, literal meaning of the] words [*ci*], nor take the words in such a way as to harm the aim [*zhi*]; rather meet that aim with your own intention [*yi*]."

arguments on their respective referents,[1] but it is clear that *zhi*, the intention of ancient people, and from which a reader can get a moral lesson or sagacious insight, is conveyed by *wen* and *ci*, and *yi* is the means to get it by the process of "*yi yi ni zhi*".

Huang Junjie named Mencius's "*yi yi ni zhi*" a "dialogical approach",[2] a dialogue between the text and the interpreter, but Mencius did not provide any further explanation on it. Commentators supplemented it with glossaries and paraphrases as early as in Han dynasty. Zhao Qi in his commentary on *Mencius* considered this verse carefully and defined the four items, and he proposed that the homogeneity of the psychological makeup of a human being ensures the feasibility of this practice. Zhao Qi's commentary to Mencius's discourse goes:[3]

> *Wen* are the words readers quote from poetry, through them the reader expresses the matters he wants to explain; *ci* are that which the poet recites, *zhi* is that which the poet so desires [to express]; *yi* is the mind of the reader when explaining the ode. […] Human feelings (*renqing*) are not far from each other, and if one wants to find the true meaning of the text, one must meet the intention of the author with one's own mind to ensure that his mind is close to and in line with the *zhi* of the author.
>
> 文，詩之文章所引以興事也。辭，詩人所歌詠之辭。志，詩人志所欲之事。意，學者之心意也。[……]人情不遠，以己之意逆詩人之志，是爲得其實矣。

[1] For example, on different understandings of the four of Zhao Qi, Zhu Xi and Wu Qi, see Zhou Guangqing, *op. cit.*, pp. 356-7.
[2] Huang Junjie, *Dongya ruxue: jingdian yu quanshi de bianzheng* (Taipei: Guoli Taiwan daxue chuban zhongxin, 2007), p. 22.
[3] Li Xueqin (ed.) *Shisanjing zhushu, Mengzi zhushu* (Beijing: Beijing Daxue chuanshe, 1999), p. 253. English translation adopted from Wei-chieh Lin "A Hermeneutic Interpretation of the *Mencius* by Zhu Xi", pp. 42, 3.

What in Zhao Qi's commentary merits highlight is that he rested the possibility of "*yi yi ni zhi*" on the homogeneity of "human feelings" (*renqing*). Another important observation is Zhao's insight into Mencius's intention that "*yi yi ni zhi*" is not meant to be used in reading odes only. On explaining "in explaining an ode, one should not allow the words to get in the way of the sentence, nor the sentence to get in the way of the intention. The right way is to meet the intention of the poet with sympathetic understanding", Zhao commented that "this is to encourage later generations to search deeply the meaning so as to understand the text, and it is not meant to be used in reading *Odes* only."[1] Zhao Qi also pointed out that "Mencius is very good at using metaphors, so his speech is not hastening, but his meaning can be delivered to the full extent".[2] It seemed as though Zhao would generalize it to discover a new aspect of reading, but no further information can confirm this. He only provided a preliminary note on this issue, and the method of "*yi yi ni zhi*" did not receive much attention from the Confucians in the following millennium until Zhu Xi. Probably this lack of interest was because the scholars deemed this a mere reading technique. Zhu Xi differed from Zhao in showing how this practice is possible. In Zhu's commentary on this section, he noticed that:[3]

> This concerns the method of interpreting poems: one should not let the understanding of a certain word hinder the understanding of the whole sentence, and one should not let the understanding of one sentence hinder the understanding of the intended meaning of the composition. One should meet the intention of the original writer with one's sympathetic understanding: this is the only way to grasp it. One should not focus only on the literal meaning; one would, for example, when reading the chapter "Yunhan", gain the impression that the Zhou dynasty

[1] Li Xueqin (ed.) *Shisanjing zhushu, Mengzi zhushu*, p. 10.
[2] Ibid, p. 10
[3] Zhu Xi (ed.), *Sishu zhangju jizhu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), p.306, English translation, Wei-chieh Lin, "A Hermeneutic Interpretation of the *Mencius* by Zhu Xi", p. 45.

had not even one surviving subject. Only when one meets the intention of the original writer with sympathetic understanding will one sense that what worried the writer was the impending drought, not that the Zhou had no surviving subjects.

言說詩之法，不可以一字而害一句之義，不可以一句而害設辭之志，當以己意迎取作者之志，乃可得之。若但以其辭而已，則如《雲漢》所言，是周之民真無遺種矣。惟以意逆之。則知作詩者之志在于憂旱，而非真無遺民也。

As abovementioned, Huang Junjie characterized Zhu's method as a "dialogical approach"; the hypothetical "dialogue" between the ancient people and the reader via text is a one-way conversation, since one must be slow to construe a conversation between the deceased and their lives. However, by furthering the discussion of "*yi yi ni zhi*", Zhu proposed a hypothesis on how to carry out this dialogue on another occasion, this time with focus on the action of *ni* (i.e. to meet.):[1]

To *ni* means to wait. It is like to wait for someone who is on the way, when he is not coming yet, you have to wait patiently, and he will anyway arrive sooner or later. When he is not coming yet, you are becoming impatient, and going forward to find him, such is not using your sympathetic understanding to receive the intention (*yi yi ni zhi*), but using your sympathetic understanding to catch the intention (*yi yi zhuo zhi*). By doing so, you are simply beating the ancients' speech into the shape of your favor; it by no means helps.

逆者，等待之謂也。如前途等待一人，未來時且須耐心等待，將來自有來時候。他未來，其心急切，又要進前尋求，卻不是‘以意逆志’，是以意捉志也。如此，只是牽率古人言語，入做自家意中來，終無進益。”

[1] Li Jingde (ed.), *Zhuzi yulei* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2004), p. 180.

Zhu's interpretation differs from Zhao's at two points. First, "Zhu likened the relationship between *wen* and *ci* to that between 'words and sentences'."[1] And Zhu would prefer to read this as "concern[ing] the method of interpreting poems." These differences notwithstanding, both hold that there was an intention implied in the action of actor or the speech of the articulator whose actions or words were preserved in the text, and such an intention is to be received by interpreters.

Evolution of the understanding of "*yi yi ni zhi*" before Wang Ruoxu

As demonstrated in the previous section, the understanding of "*yi yi ni zhi*" varied from one interpreter to another. The terms of the method deserve further study, which would also provide an overview of the evolution of the interpretation. Amongst other things, the ongoing debate on the dialectic of *yi* and *zhi* is essential to the discussion. Zhou Guangqing subdivided *zhi* into two kinds; one is the author's reflection and criticism of the society in which the author himself is a member.[2] Therefore the author's very authentic experience ensures such reflection and criticism is valid and meaningful, so the *zhi* is not the unrealistic idea of a daydreamer (and when the author puts them into words, the point comes in rhetoric and metaphors). The second kind is the insight the author sheds when contemplating political and social practice, e.g. warfare, or other historical events.[3] This insight makes the reflection and criticism not only meaningful and valid, but also relevant to people of other time and space, since the moral lesson transcends the limits of time and space, therefore it is not a waste of time for a reader of later generations to exert so much energy to grasp the intention (*zhi*) of the deceased.

Van Zoeren's study on the hermeneutic history of the *Odes* traces the conceptual development of the two from Warring State to Song and provides a useful guide to locate

[1] Lin, "A Hermeneutic Interpretation of the *Mencius* by Zhu Xi", p. 45.
[2] Zhou Guangqing, *op. cit.*, p. 357.
[3] Ibid.

the current discussion of Wang Ruoxu in the continuum of Confucianism hermeneutics. Van Zoeren noticed that z*hi* refers to two things at once: to an unrealized but desired state of affairs in the world and to that desire itself as a feature of someone's personality; to both the content of the wish and to the wishing itself.[1] In early text, e.g. *Mozi*, *zhi* and *yi* were used interchangeably while *yi* "referred like *zhi* to the motivating impulse behind some deed or action", *yi* was a more limited concept than *zhi*: the *zhi* referred to a whole orientation or disposition of a person, an "ambition" or "project" that was an ongoing feature of the personality; whereas the *yi* was specific to the particular act or statement in which it (potentially) exhausted itself.

In the Confucian context, *zhi* was painted with moral tones. In *The Analects, zhi* became the moral project or the ambition of a morally committed person; it was adapted to Confucian concerns of morality to such an extent that in *The Analects* an undefined *zhi* was amounting to a moral commitment. It was so well integrated into Confucianism that "in late Warring States texts like the *Mencius* and the *Xunzi*, the *zhi* became an element of the common 'philosophical anthropology' of the day […] the *zhi* was an integral element of the personality, connected to and leading the emotional nature".[2]

According to Van Zoeren, "the *zhi* was thus an ongoing and guiding preoccupation, either moral or frankly secular, […] [t]he *zhi* symbolized or rather exemplified the whole thrust of a person's being, for it was connected to and represented personality in a particularly direct and important way." However, the issue is that *zhi* was not itself directly observable but had to be inferred from words or deeds. The revelation of the *zhi* could be, as it were, involuntary: that is, a casual word or deed might reveal to the hermeneutically astute observer everything about a person's orienting preoccupations

[1] Van Zoeren, *op. cit.*, p. 12.
[2] Ibid, p. 163.

and thus that individual's character and projects.[1] Therefore, a reader should pay close attention in discovering the very *zhi* of the sage and other exemplary figures, from whose words and deeds one may learn invaluable lessons, by paying heed to their speeches and actions recorded in the Classics. Attention is necessary, but never sufficient. *Zhi* should be obtained with assistance of sympathetic understanding *yi*, which stands for the faculty for understanding in the mind of the reader.[2] It pre-exists in the mind of readers, and varies from one reader to another.

"*Yi yi ni zhi*" in Wang Ruoxu's writings

Van Zoeren noticed that *yi* and *zhi* were sometimes used interchangeably; this type of use could be found in Wang Ruoxu's writing. In one of his entries on *The Analects* 15:36,[3]

> The Master said, "When faced with the opportunity to practice benevolence do not give precedence even to your teacher."
>
> 子曰："當仁，不讓于師。"

Wang cites Cheng Yi's reading that "to practice benevolence is volitional, one has nobody to give precedence" and rebuts that "I am afraid that the Master's *yi* is not meant to cover this (as in Cheng's discourse) […] Hui'an (Zhu Xi's courtesy name)'s comments were quite apposite, since Confucius' saying was an exaggeration, it did not really mean to not respect one's teacher, [when contemplating this] students should use their sympathetic understanding (*yi*) to receive *it* (italic added)." The "*it*" that students should use their sympathetic understanding to receive is intention (*zhi*), if we follow the syntactic structure of the phrase "*yi yi ni zhi*". However, in reading Wang's comments, one can

[1] Ibid, p. 57.
[2] Ibid, p. 358.
[3] Lau (tr.) *The Analects*, p. 137; Wang, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

only get a semantically satisfied referent of "it", that is "the master's *yi* (this *yi* is the intended meaning that the author is to deliver)". From this, the interchangeability of *yi* and *zhi* is not invisible. However, I am by no means equating every *yi* in Wang's writings to *zhi*, nor vice versa, even though in many occasions such a relationship is highly likely to be established. To keep the discussion focused and to preclude distractions caused by the many meanings of *yi*, I will delve into cases in which "*yi yi ni zhi*" is directly referred, either in Wang's criticism toward others, or in his quotation of other commentaries, and cases of "*yi ci hai zhi*" (to allow the sentence to get in the way of the intention), as an integral part in Mencius's discourse were surveyed too.

In the first entry in *Mengzi bian huo*, Wang makes a direct reference to "*yi yi ni zhi*", followed by a citation from Zhao Qi's commentary,[1]

> [Mencius] wanted later generations to search for their intention (*yi*) deeply, to understand the words, (which practice) is nevertheless not to be constrained on explaining the *Odes* only.
>
> 欲使後人深求其意，以解其文，非但施于說《詩》也。

Wang noticed that Zhao Qi's commentary on "*yi yi ni zhi*" deserved emphasis. Zhao pointed out that this was Mencius's admonition given to later generations for their better understanding of *wen* in general, rather than a method merely applicable to interpreting the Odes. Wang was sensitive and receptive to this approach, since he was quite often piqued by the misunderstandings Song scholars made on *Mencius* and other Classics. Wang believed that the Song Confucians were sometimes incapable of putting "*yi yi ni zhi*" into use. If one does not apply "*yi yi ni zhi*", he would possibly rely on literal meanings of the characters and words to make sense of the text, in order to know what lesson the author meant to deliver. This is wrong in many respects. Such a reading

[1] Zhao Qi, "Mengzi tici jie xu", Li Xueqin (ed.) *Shisanjing zhushu, Mengzi zhushu*, p. 10, quoted in Wang, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

strategy would keep readers away from correct understanding: the real intention of the sage is different from the textual rendition, as the tropes and rhetoric adopted in constructing the text may disguise the real intended meaning and mislead careless and unsophisticated readers. Just as the lines taken as an example by Mencius, "Of the remaining multitudes of Zhou, / Not a single man survived",[1] which is not necessarily a historically viable account,[2] but should be taken as a hyperbole. Therefore, Wang urges readers to practice "*yi yi ni zhi*" in reading. He quotes Zhao's explanation on Mencius's caveat to remind readers that what Mencius meant by saying "the right way is to meet the intention of the poet with sympathetic understanding" was "to ask the later generation to search for the intended meaning so as to understand the text",[3] which process was the reverse of the commonly used way of reading.

How can one "search for the intended meaning" before deciphering the text (*wen*)? Text refers to the particular sentences that provoke difficulties in reaching intellectual consensus - the points of contention and doubts, the knots where many contending explanations are entangled. Fortunately, not every part of a book is like this, otherwise the whole book will be unintelligible and became devoid of any meaning. Most parts of a book should be easy to understand with the language capacity of ordinary people and a consensus on its meaning can be conveniently reached. Using the understanding of these parts to reconstruct the historical circumstances, and using sympathetic understanding to simulate the psychological state of actors in that situation (since "*renqing*" is not far away from one and another, in other words, human minds are somehow homogeneous and function more or less similarly), by the reference of the allusions, metaphors,

[1] *Ode* no. 258; translation as in D. C. Lau's *Mencius*, p. 104.
[2] If we follow Zhu Xi's understanding, then this line was an exaggeration to impress upon the reader the severity of the damage caused by the drought on the people - that none of the Zhou people had survived. However, some suggest that this line literally meant that all Zhou people were suffering from the drought and none escaped from it. This reading is suggested by Zhao Qi in his commentary in *Mengzi zhushu*.
[3] Wang, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

exaggerations in the text, a reader may be able to overcome the ambiguities raised by the difficult text and get the intention of the author hidden behind the text. This is the mechanism of "*yi yi ni zhi*".

Wang reminds readers that "the Mencius's speeches teach according to the availability of teaching opportunities, and do not follow a pattern. Anything that can guide people to good, even the opinion of an uninitiated person residing in a small alley, can be used in Mencius' teaching, as long as it can be used to illuminate the dao. Gauged against the subtleties in Confucius' teaching, Mencius' teachings sound incongruent, therefore scholars had casted doubts on their validity. But if one could sympathetically understand them, Mencius's teachings are perfectly matched [with Confucius']."[1] So the importance of Mencius's caveat and Zhao Qi's elaboration rest on the fact that Mencius's speeches are ambiguous and difficult to explain. If one wants to understand it well, one must understand it sympathetically, rather than in a verbatim manner, otherwise he would definitely be clouded by the ambiguity at the literary level, because the heterogeneity of Mencius's speeches are derived from multiple sources. Because of this, the *Mencius* is always misunderstood and groundlessly challenged. Wang Ruoxu points out that Sima Guang, Su Shi and Zhang Jiucheng all did so. One must be reminded that, however, difficulties are not absent in other Classics. Quite interestingly, only two cases of direct reference of "*yi yi ni zhi*" were found in *Mengzi bian huo*; most of Wang's direct references of "*yi yi ni zhi*" cases were found in *Lunyu bian huo*. The clustering of "*yi yi ni zhi*" in reading *The Analects* indicates the possibility of applying this method to understanding the Classics in general, and in many cases the uncertainties in *The Analects* need to be redressed.

[1] Wang, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

Use of "*yi yi ni zhi*" in these cases can be grouped according to three types of problems it deals with, first to clarify ambiguities, second to understand exaggerations in conversation, and third, to remind people not to follow the adages of ancients in a slavish way, as they are "sticking to the words". These three types of problems and Wang's approach to solve them will be examined in the following part.

To clarify "ambiguities"

The Classics and their alleged authors were deemed as the source and epitome of moral standards. The author, especially when the identity of that author was being regarded as the sage, should be free from any kind of moral defect, and his disciples should be at least free of principal defects such as failure in complying with Confucius' teachings. However, *The Analects* was found to have some ambiguous verses, where one was unable to perceive, from the sayings of the sage and the disciples, the superior quality expected in Confucius' judgment, or the disciples' adherence to Confucian principles. Wang had great confidence in the sagely quality and believed that those who doubted the sagely quality had to be wrong in their readings. How can we understand the verses and align them with the teachings of the sage? To overcome this difficulty, one needs to find the "original intention[1] of Confucius' teaching".[2] To demonstrate how, Wang points to one entry of *Lunyu bian huo*, which deals with the interpretation of *The Analects* 17:22:

> The Master said, "The man whose belly is full all day and who does not put his mind to some use is sure to meet with difficulties. Are there not such things as *bo* and *yi*? Even playing these games is better than being idle." [3]
>
> 子曰："飽食終日，無所用心，難矣哉！不有博弈者乎？爲之猶賢乎已！"

[1] Here "intention" in the proceeding paragraphs was being used to translate *zhi*; it is apposite to use this word to deliver the meaning of *ben yi*.
[2] Wang, *op. cit.*, p. 88.
[3] Lau (tr.), *The Analects*, p. 147.

In this entry, Wang quotes three pieces of commentarial notes from Southern Song Confucians, one from a certain Li, one Yang Shi and the third Zhang Shi. Both Li's and Yang's are preserved in Zhu Xi's work in *Lunyu jizhu* and *Lunyu jingyi* respectively, as quoted in Wang's writing:[1]

> 晦庵载李氏之说曰："非教人博弈也，以甚言无所用心之不可耳。"可谓能以意逆志矣。杨氏曰："饱食终日，无所用心，则放僻邪侈，将无所不为，故以是而系其心，岂不犹贤于已乎？"南轩亦云："信如斯言，则是圣人真欲使人为之矣。苟其人了不用心于他善，将恃此以为是乎！"甚非立教之本意，故不取。
>
> Hui'an (Zhu Xi's courtesy name) recorded Li's interpretation: "it is not to instruct others to play *bo* and *yi*, [Confucius was] emphasising that not putting one's mind into some use is unacceptable. " This interpreation is a good example of sympathetic understanding. Yang understood that " [if there is a] 'man whose belly is full all day and who does not put his mind to some use', then his mind could slip into evil, [therefore] any wrongful doing would he not hesitate to commit. [Confucius] use these [*bo* and *yi*] to put his mind [into some use]. Isn't this better [than slipping into evil]?" Nanxuan (Zhang Shi's courtesy name) also contended: "if one followed this verse, he would believe that the sage indeed asked others to [play *bo* and *yi*]. However if he does not put their mind into some good use, could he justifying his action [playing *bo* and *yi*] relying on this verse?" [Yang and Nanxuan's interpretations] are not the intended meaning of this verse so I do not accept their interpretations.

Wang takes Li's commentary as an example of being able to apply the principle of "*yi yi ni zhi*" in reading a seemingly ambiguous verse. Li's idea is that Confucius had never

[1] Wang, op. cit., p. 88.

suggested idle ones to play a game of chess, but rather, Confucius considered playing chess a practice that was hardly acceptable in his code of conduct. By contrasting idling one's mind and heart with playing chess or board games, Confucius accentuated the extreme unacceptability of the former conduct.[1]

Yang's reading was suggesting that idling might push one into unrestrained aberrant behavior and even worse causes one to fall into immorality. To prevent one to idling, Confucius advised him to occupy his mind with games, lest he retreated into serious mistakes.[2] Zhang Shi's reading goes: the verse seems to suggest that Confucius wanted people to play game instead of idling, but if one put other better conducts aside, he cannot justify his conduct with this verse. Yang's reading is actively asserting the use of gaming in regulating one's mind; Zhang's is passively asserting that gaming is not enough in disciplining one's conduct. However, both were wrong, because gaming here is a metaphor pointing to meaningless behavior, not some game to be played. If one uses sympathetic understanding to re-experience the sage's context and perceive the intention, one should realize that by his sagely quality, Confucius would not propose gaming to his idling disciples. It is also very likely that when hearing this saying, the disciple would naturally became aware that availing himself to idling is so unacceptable, more so than playing games. Li's reading was praised as a good example of "*yi yi ni zhi*", while Yang's and Zhang's failed to appreciate the hidden message, and relied on the words.

In regards to tackling ambiguity, another example of an indirect application of "*yi yi ni zhi*" can be found in Wang's reading of the disciple Zixia's words of comfort to Sima Niu, another disciple, when the former hearing the latter's grievance for having no brothers. In *The Analects* 12:5,[3]

[1] Zhu Xi (ed.), *Si shu zhangju jizhu*, p. 181,
[2] Zhu Xi (ed.), *Lun Meng jing yi*, v. 198, p. 384.
[3] Lau's (tr.), *The Analects*, p. 113, with minor changes in the spelling of the names; Wang, *op. cit.*, p. 72-3.

> Sima Niu appared worried, saying, “All men have brothers, I alone have none.” Zixia said, “I have heard it being said that: life and death are a matter of Destiny; wealth and honor depend on Heaven. If the gentleman is reverent and does nothing amiss, is respectful towards others and observant of the rites, all within the Four Seas are his brothers. What need is there for the gentleman to worry about not having any brother? ”
>
> 司馬牛憂曰：“人皆有兄弟，我獨亡。”子夏曰：“商聞之矣：死生有命，富貴在天。君子敬而無失，與人恭而有禮，四海之內，皆兄弟也。君子何患乎無兄弟也？”

Wang believed that Zixia’s comforting words were only a temporary relief for Sima Niu’s grievance and were not meant to suggest that anyone within the Four Seas should necessarily be a brother. Wang also did not agree with some commentators’ justification of Zixia’s ground. Wang noticed that Yang Shi’s over-stretching of Zixia’s word was amounting to applying “heretical” Mohism’s impartial love, as Yang proposed his reading that “all under the heaven are returning to the same benevolence, aren’t they brothers?”. Among the commentaries preserved in *Lunyu jizhu*, Wang singled out Zhu Xi’s original comment that “it is a word told when there is no better choice; readers should use their sympathetic understanding to receive the intention”. Perhaps Wang was citing from memory and was accommodated with the phrase of “*yi yi ni zhi*”, he substituted in his quotation “*bu yi ci hai yi*” (“should not allow the sentence to get in the way of the sense”) as in Zhu Xi’s comments in *Lunyu zhangju jizhu* with “*yi yi ni zhi*”. Despite the proximity of “*yi yi ni zhi*” and “*bu yi ci hai yi*” in Mencius’s teaching, Wang’s choice of “*yi yi ni zhi*” shifts the emphasis from avoiding misinterpretation of text caused by the circumstance (as Zhu Xi intended) to the searching for the intention (as the phrase “ *yi yi ni zhi*” suggests).

To understand "exaggerations"

Some verses in the Classics consist of exaggerated expressions, which are not easy to perceive because of their subtlety. These give the reader extra difficulty in reading and understanding: if one cannot discover the nuanced idea and takes the literal meaning, he can hardly have an effective reading and learning process, since the implied teaching conveyed by the language was missed out. Such passages have always attracted inquiries, e.g. the verse (already discussed above) in *The Analects* 15:36,[1]

> The Master said, "When faced with the opportunity to practice benevolence do not give precedence even to your teacher (*shi*)."
>
> 子曰：當仁不讓于師。

This verse is problematic in how to understand the term "*shi*", which could be glossed as either a preceptor or an army. The former was the traditional interpretation and the accepted option in *Wujing zhengyi* (the "old interpretation" in Wang's terms), but from Song on, some scholars understood it as a group of people.[2] Both old and new interpretations fell short in giving a satisfactory and cogent explanation of the meaning of Confucius' saying. One may well understand the meaning of every word, but he would not get the point of the sentence: is this anything to do with a "*shi*"? Wang noticed that the sage's comment was a hyperbole, which cannot be understood as "(one should, or is licensed) not to give precedence to his teacher", rather the reader should read it with sympathetic understanding to receive the sage's very intention, which was illustrated perfectly by Zhu Xi's comments being quoted in Wang's critical essay. Zhu Xi's suggestion was that "this verse means that when practicing benevolence, one should be brave and determined to do it, and then proceed forward, even if one's teacher is there (in

[1] Lau (tr.), *The Analects*, p. 137, in Wang, *op. cit.*, p. 86.
[2] E.g. Zhou Shi and Yang Jie took "*shi*" as a multitude of people. Their understandings were quoted in Wang's essay, but according to Hu Chuanzhi's editorial note, Zhou Shi and Yang Jie's interpretations were no longer extant. According to Ma Duanlin's *Wenxian tongkao*, v. 30 "Xuanju kao", Jia Bian understood *shi* as a group of people in a palace examination in 1006.

which situation a pupil is supposed to consult whom before proceeding).” Wang observes that this verse was Confucius’ teaching device to emphasise the importance of practicing benevolence, and does not amount to telling one to leave or defy his teacher with the pretext of doing benevolence.

The abovementioned hyperbole involved a qualitative comparison between the urgency of doing benevolence and the obedience observed at the presence of a teacher. Such qualitative measurement is perhaps not easy to discern, which is why various interpretations arose, but few, if any, discovered that it was a hyperbole. On the contrary, we may think that if a hyperbole is quantitative in nature, it may be easy to notice. However, one cannot be this optimistic, as in reading another problematic verse in Book 12 of *The Analects*,[1]

> The Master said, “If anyone can arrive at the truth in a legal dispute on the evidence of only one party, it is, perhaps, You (Zilu’s name).” Zilu never put off the fulfillment of a promise to the next day.
>
> 子曰：“片言可以折獄者，其由也與？”子路無宿諾。

Wang quotes some commentaries of Song scholars in this entry. The comments referred in Wang’s entry were trying to relate Zilu’s personal character (i.e. of being able to keep promises) to his acumen in judging a case. However, Wang challenges this opinion by arguing that to be able to keep one’s promise does not help and is an irrelevant trait for being a good judge. Then how do we make sense of this verse? Wang again urges the reader to adopt sympathetic understanding in getting the real intention of Confucius’ mind when he said this. Wang believed that the “evidence of one party” (*pianyan*) is nothing more than exaggeration. It should not bear the implication as Zhu Xi suggested that “*pianyan*” meant an incomplete statement that Zilu could make judgments so fast

[1] Lau (tr.), *The Analects*, p. 122.

even before the plaintiff could finish his words. If the situation in Zhu Xi's understanding become fact, a trial heard by Zilu would definitely go absurd. This is because practically nobody can judge a case before hearing the full statement, but Zhu Xi understood the verse so literally that he even believed Zilu was indeed able to do so because he was a credible person (as suggested by the last sentence of the verse).

These two examples illustrate Wang's utilization of "*yi yi ni zhi*". It was used in determining the meaning of a text which could not be understood satisfactorily in a literal way because the rhetoric in the text rendered literal understanding off-target. Different texts should be understood accordingly: if a text is a record of a fact, semantic knowledge is enough to secure a good understanding. If a text is not a factual report, but a hyperbole, one should be aware of its nature and adjust his reading strategy to "*yi yi ni zhi*", using which a reader would conveniently discover the hidden message disguised in the hyperbole, because the application of "*yi yi ni zhi*" allows one to think about the situation in which this particular saying was uttered, and consider to whom, and on what matters the message is conveyed. Only with this kind of information in mind, can literal meaning be made meaningful, and can the moral lesson in subtle language be heard. This is especially important and necessary in reading some texts that are relevant to the cultivation of the reader's personality.

To refrain from "sticking to the words"

The gist of "*yi yi ni zhi*" is to understand the meanings of the text with sympathy, but not to understand the text meanings literally. Not only do hyperbolic expressions in the text intrigue readers to "*yi yi ni zhi*", but the sage's speeches too. Wang noticed that:[1]

> It is quite certain that the sage had unequivocal opinions, but also made general remarks that do not exclude other possibilities … Scholars understood these types

[1] Wang, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

> [of the sage's words] in the same manner and did not apply his "*yi yi ni zhi*" to receive the sage's intention, therefore often they were concealed [from the truth] and cannot understand thoroughly.
>
> 聖人固有決定之論，亦有姑言大體而不盡其變者，……學者一概用之，不能以意逆志，故常蔽而不通。

By commenting so on the scholars, Wang was actually advising them or other readers of the same group to bear it in mind that the sage's words of teaching are a collection of opinions given in various situations to different people, or sometimes general ideas, guidelines or no more than personal preferences that are not meant to be rules and regulations of people's daily life. Hence a reader has to be mindful in reading and think twice: is the text giving a general idea (that many possibilities are applicable)? And is the text giving a specific idea (that it is not applicable to other cases)? If he wants to know the answer, he has to resort to the intention; never should he rely on the text or words. Sticking to the literal meanings sometimes leads to absurdity, for example, in *The Analects* 5:20, it is recorded:[1]

> Jiwenzi always thought three times before taking action. When the Master was told of this, he commented, "Twice is quite enough."
>
> 季文子三思而後行。子聞之曰："再斯可矣。"

It is relatively clear that Confucius was addressing Jiwenzi's being overly cautious. If a reader thinks Confucius is promoting "thinking twice" and discouraging "thinking thrice", he is fastening his mind on the words. Quite some eminent scholars and commentators did so. Wang in his entry listed three: Zheng Xuan, Su Shi and Cheng Yi,[2] all of whom intended that "thinking thrice" was unnecessary, and would even give rise to selfish

[1] Lau (tr.), *The Analects*, p. 79, with modification.
[2] Wang, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

calculation. Cheng even went to find evidence in *Zuo Commentary* to substantiate Jiwenzi's misfortune caused by his being overly cautious.[1]

However, Wang noticed, in handling various issues, certainly one need not always be overly cautious, and sometimes one even does not need to think twice, but there are troublesome matters requiring much more contemplation such that even thinking thrice is not adequate.[2] There is no set course; it changes with the circumstances. The way Wang grasped Confucius' teaching implied in this verse was by analyzing the situation in which Confucius said the verse, and Wang seeks to restore "twice is quite enough" in its context. He analyzed the intention with which Confucius said the words, and pointed out that Confucius' utterance was specifically aiming to comment on Jiwenzi in particular, according to Confucius' knowledge on his judgmental capacity, and the sage did not intend to generalize this conclusion. "Twice is quite enough" is not an axiom that applies to everyone, nor would "thinking thrice" lead to some undesirable consequences as Cheng believed. Here Wang demonstrated how to eliminate the absurdity caused by sticking to the words in reading by the application of "*yi yi ni zhi*" and the importance of discovering the intention.

[1] Cheng Yi's suggestion is in Zhu Xi (ed.), *Lun Meng jingyi*, v. 198, p. 116.
[2] Wang, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

Conclusion

Reading from Wang's preamble to *Mengzi bianhuo*, it seems that Wang's motivation in giving "*yi yi ni zhi*" extraordinary consideration was his belief that Song Confucians misunderstood Mencius. This misunderstanding was attributed to Song Confucians' over relying on the words recorded in the Classics and overlooking the context and hence failing to discern the real intention which the sage wished to deliver. This misunderstanding required urgent redress.

From the discussions in preceding sections, it is clear that Xianqiu Meng's way of reading *Odes* escaped the context by isolating the two lines of an ode from the surrounding lines and relying on its literal meaning. The result was that the two lines became meaningful as a phrase by itself, but meaningless and even absurd when reading it with the whole stanza. By applying "*yi yi ni zhi*", Wang was trying to restore the contextuality in order to get the intention. I think, from two perspectives, Wang's reading can be read against the intellectual background; one is the political and ideological-oriented contentions over *Mencius*; and the second is the attention paid to understanding the "intention" of the learning material during one's learning journey.

Huang Junjie observed that in Northern Song after the book of *Mencius* was canonized as a result of Wang Anshi's reform, two kinds of scholarly reactions emerged. The first reaction was the veneration of *Mencius* as a Classic and the full attention paid to its reading, and second was the vehement critiques from dissidents.[1] The first reaction is easy to understand, the second reaction resulted from the ensuing "one-sided favoritism toward *Mencius*" caused by Wang Anshi's ideological campaign that "provoked anti-Mencius sentiment among Wang Anshi's opponents", and this rendered the Song debate

[1] Huang Junjie, *Mencian Hermeneutics: a history of interpretations in China*, (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2001), p. 156.

over Mencius "intensely pragmatic, full of political overtones."[1] In such circumstances, it is hard for participants to avoid misreading. Wang was acute in sensing this scholarly attention paid to *Mencius* and in discerning misreading in Song scholars' interpretation, but he overlooked the political and intellectual environments that compelled them into this kind of reading.

During Song times, awareness of getting the "intention" of the sage and the Classics in one's learning emerged. Knowing the "intention" is the initial and fundamental step in learning for a seriously determined Confucian. As Ouyang Xiu put it in a letter to Zu Zezhi, one "ought to take the Classics as his teacher. To take the Classics as his teacher, he must first uncover their intentions."[2] Wei-chieh Lin noticed that "Zhu Xi stresses that the reader or interpreter must adhere to the intention of the author. Attaching so much significance to the author's intended meaning is a new development in the tradition of interpreting the Classics. […] in the process of interpreting the Classics, the interpreter must establish a particular kind of interpretation that is in unison with the author's (not only the sage's) intended meaning."[3] It seems that the emphasis given by Zhu Xi on the intention was the antithesis of Northern Song politics-oriented scholars' reading of some Classics.

Zhu Xi's method was predicated on two factors, one was the attention paid to the words of the ancients, and the other was a hermeneutic attitude of "humbleness and patience", which allowed one to become patient enough to "wait for" the advent of the author's intention.[4] In line with Zhu's development, but not always satisfied by Zhu's interpretation, Wang commences his learning journey of *Mencius* by emphasizing "*yi yi ni zhi*" and generalizes this concept into reading other Classics. Differing from Zhu,

[1] Ibid, p. 169.
[2] Ouyang Xiu, *Ouyang Xiu quanji* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2001), p. 1010; English translation from Bol, *"This Culture of Ours"*, p. 184.
[3] Lin, ""A hermeneutic interpretation of the *Mencius* by Zhu Xi p. 48-9.
[4] Ibid, p. 49.

Wang actively examined the situational setting of the event, words and deeds recorded in Classics. After thoroughly studying the situational settings via *renqing*, a reader may re-enact the psychological processes of the actors by analogizing the actors' circumstances and then elucidating the actors' intention, which was in turn translated into moral teaching.

It seems that Wang's "*yi yi ni zhi*" is a reasonably practical method to understand difficult texts. However, readers can be easily precluded from a meaningful and reliable reading by an apparently difficult text which is actually corrupted and distorted; more than that, a reader can also be misled by ill-formed commentaries. It is easy to observe that the foundation of understanding is the quality of the text and reliability of commentaries. How, then, did Wang ensure the quality of text? How did Wang verify the reliability of commentarial work? In the next chapter, I will discuss Wang's unique "quality control" method in reading Classics and commentaries.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE IDEA OF "*WENSHI YUFA*" IN WANG'S WRITINGS

Grammar was not a very important subject in literati learning in Song/Jin period, even though as early as in Kong Yingda's *Chunqiu Zuozhuan Zhengyi* the term "*yufa*" (語法) had been coined, in which book this term means the correct use of function words, e.g. preposition, conjunction, exclamation markers, interrogating markers etc to make a grammatically and semantically satisfied sentence. [1] Kong was a Classicist and was the person in charge of compiling the sanctioned *Wujing zhengyi*,[2] but his awareness on grammar did not receive much attention. From extant materials one can hardly find any scholar applying grammatical rules in reading Classics. No matter whether he was a philology-oriented Classicist, or a Neo-Confucian with great interest in philosophy, he would not spare his attention for grammatical issues. Perhaps the attention given to grammar was overshadowed by the spirit of creative writing, which was an important matter in personal development and civil service examination.

Compared to grammar, another concept concerning proper use of language in creative writing, "*wenshi*"（文勢）, did not receive much attention in Confucian learning either. *Wenshi*, the "potential" or "trend" of literary work, was developed in literary criticism. In *Wenxin diaolong* "Ding shi" ("setting the *shi*"), "*shi*" was understood as the particular rhetoric effect derived from a certain genre, and "setting the *shi*" means that in writing, the author should choose a particular genre in order to give his message and sentiment a suitable deliverance by writing in a specific style pertaining to that genre. For example, if one wants to make his composition read elegantly, he should write in

[1] Sun Mingliang, "Wang Ruoxu Hunan yilao ji" zhong de yufa fenxi (1), *Guhanyu yanjiu*, 2 (1995), p. 57.
[2] Ouyang Xiu (ed.), *Xin tangshu*, p. 5659.

accordance with the style of *Classics*; to achieve a fanciful and spectacular effect, one could write in the style of *Chu Ci*.[1] It is common to find discussions on *wenshi* in literary criticism, but not in the reading of Classics. The implication of this understanding of *shi* is that a particular genre can provide a convenient means to achieve a specific rhetoric end.

Wang Ruoxu was a unique scholar in this time to have invested so much energy in looking at grammatical issues in sacred texts and commentaries. Grammar, for Wang, was a key issue in understanding text and in evaluating commentaries. Along with *yufa*, Wang utilizes *wenshi* in discussing grammatical and semantic issues. Wang's *wenshi* considers the flow of language in the narration and the style used in literary works; it is often used to examine the effectiveness of a commentarial note in clarifying the Classics and revealing the intended message, and to determine the authenticity of some dubious sentences in Classics. Often in Wang's work *wenshi* and *yufa* are used interchangeably, although they derived from independent sources. More than in reading Classics, in Wang's writings on history and literary criticism *wenshi yufa* is used frequently too. Wang criticizes Sima Qian for his poor *yufa* in his *Shi Ji* in misuse of prepositions and pronouns, and uses *wenshi* to criticize the literary compositions of Ouyang Xiu and Su Shi. What Wang attempted to do was, by picking out misuses, to restore the perfect condition of the sacred text, so that the texts follow grammatical rules and can be understood without tortuous elaboration. By pointing out grammatical and semantic flaws in exemplary literature works, he reminded learners to avoid such errors in their work.

After reading Wang's work on the *Analects*, Bol suggested that Wang's objective in criticizing former commentators was "synthesis". He consciously synthesized pre-Song

[1] Liu Xie, Huang Shulin (ed.), *Zengding wenxin diaolong jiaozhu* (Beijign: Zhonghua shuju, 2000), p. 406.

and Song commentaries.[1] This attitude towards synthesis could be observed in his attempt to introduce novel reading strategies in his learning. *Wenshi yufa* is an example. Beside this attitude of synthesis, there might be some other factors to consider. In this chapter, I will investigate the use of these terms in Wang's critical essays, to observe how Wang implements these concepts in understanding Classics and for what purpose he is so interested in these concepts.

Wang Ruoxu's understanding of *wenshi yufa*

Wang believed that *wenshi* is the result of the flow of narrative and it should suit the genre, and *wenshi* is a phenomenon at the textual level and carries no moral judgment. For example, in *The Analects* 14:16 and 14:17, Confucius made a remark about Guan Zhong's decision of not committing suicide after his prince was killed by the enemy,

> Zilu said, "When Duke Huan had Prince Jiu killed, Shao Hu died for the Prince but Guan Zhong failed to do so." He added, "In that case, did he fall short of benevolence?" The Master said, "It was due to Guan Zhong that Duke Huan was able, without a show of force, to assemble the feudal lords nine times. Such was his benevolence. Such was his benevolence."
>
> 子路曰："桓公殺公子糾，召忽死之，管仲不死。"曰："未仁乎？"子曰："桓公九合諸侯，不以兵車，管仲之力也。如其仁，如其仁。"
>
> Zigong said, "I don't suppose Guan Zhong was a benevolent man. Not only did he not die for Prince Jiu, but he lived to help Duke Huan who had the Prince killed." The Master said, "Guan Zhong helped Duke Huan to become the leader of the feudal lords and to save the Empire from collapse. To this day, the common

[1] Bol, "Seeking common ground, Han literati under Jurchen rule", p. 515.

people still enjoy the benefit of his acts. Had it not been for Guan Zhong, we might well be wearing our hair down and folding our robes to the left. Surely he was not like the common man or woman who, in their petty faithfulness, commits suicide in a ditch without anyone taking any notice."

子貢曰："管仲非仁者與？桓公殺公子糾，不能死，又相之。"子曰："管仲相桓公，霸諸侯，一匡天下，民到于今受其賜。微管仲，吾其被發左衽矣。豈若匹夫匹婦之爲諒也，自經于溝瀆而莫之知也。"

Confucius' comment on Guan Zhong seems hard to reconcile with the virtue of loyalty since Guan Zhong was a traitor of his former lord Prince Jiu and served the murderer of his former lord. Cheng Yi argued that since Duke Huan is the older brother and Prince Jiu the younger brother, it was legitimate for Duke Huan to assume the throne and remove his opponent Prince Jiu. That was why Confucius always suffixed the "Qi" and "Duke" to Huan to acknowledge his mandate in *The Spring and Autumn Annals*, which tells the story of Duke Huan killing Prince Jiu in a battle, and Guan Zhong, the erstwhile administrator of Prince Jiu surrendering his service to Duke Huan after Prince Jiu's death. But the language used in the *Annals* is short and brief, like "Duke [Huan] punished Qi for allowing Jiu [to enter]" and "Xiaobai (Duke Huan's name) of Qi entered Qi". Cheng believed that in the *Annals* these short sentences and the concurrence of the country name Qi and Duke Huan were indicators of Confucius' indirect acknowledgment of Duke Huan's mandate and pardon to Guan Zhong's betrayal, while Confucius' appraisal in *The Analects* directly indicated that Guan Zhong and Duke Huan should not be subjected to moral judgment for their murder of Prince Jiu. [1]

[1] Zhu Xi (ed.), *Si shu zhangju jizhu*, p. 153; for a more detailed version see Zhu Xi (ed.) *Lun Meng jingyi* , *juan* 7 B.

Wang, however, disagreed. He cited Sima Qian and Du Yu's research to support his opinion that Prince Jiu was in fact the older brother and Duke Huan is the usurper, and that suffixing "Qi" to Duke Huan can hardly be seen as Confucius' ethical pardon. Wang examined the *wenshi* of the concise and highly formalized sentences in *The Annals* and concluded that the brief sentences and suffixing of Qi to Duke Huan are the result of the flow *wenshi* and it was neither an ethical pardon given to Guan or the Duke, nor a moral judgment. The wordings in the *Annals* are simply a report of the story, "it is the result of *wenshi*," writes Wang, "there should not be any other readings."[1] *Wenshi* is purely textual and technical and does not carry moral judgment.

Compared to *wenshi*, *yufa* is more often used in discussing the proper application of single words than the wording of sentence. It concerns whether a particle, a pronoun or a preposition is used correctly. Wang uses these concepts to deal with the grammatical and semantic issues encountered in his readings. To him, parts of the Classics after centuries of circulation may become distorted and easily misunderstood. However, as a kind of literary composition, Classics should follow *wenshi* and should be a coherent whole. Any parts in the Classics belong to this whole and so theoretically should share this coherence. By virtue of this coherence, the corrupted components can be discriminated by checking it against this coherence embodied by the narration and the grammar. If it abides by the coherence, it is authentic, if it goes against the coherence and corrupts the coherence; it is not part of the Classics. In the same vein, if a commentary suggests a reading that makes the Classics out of coherence, the commentary is wrong.

[1] Wang, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

Wang Ruoxu's use of "*wenshi yufa*" in reading Classics and commentaries

Wenshi yufa are the means to eliminate the impediments posed by distorted texts in the *Classics* and low quality commentaries. Distorted texts in the *Classics* can be discovered by reading the text in question against the coherence of the whole of the Classics. The particular text is checked in detail to see if its narration, sentence structure, words and the tones, etc are abiding by the style exhibited in the coherence. If the text does not show congruence, it is quite possible its authenticity will be challenged. In dealing with commentarial works, in the case when one commentary is not grammatically sound or the readings suggested in the annotation render the text absurd, this interpretation is surely wrong, because the *Classics* should not contain absurdity. In the following parts I will discuss how Wang uses these concepts. The examples I collected from his anthology can be broadly grouped into two kinds according to the following criteria: first is to ensure the authenticity of the texts of particular *Classics*, i.e. to eliminate distorted texts and unauthentic texts intersected into the *Classic*s due to the editorial procedures and vicissitudes of the long history of the texts' circulation; second, to use grammar as a standard to check and control on the quality of commentarial works and also as the defense of the intention of the text against liberal interpretation, as Wang believes: "in talking about commentarial works, no matter how profound the theory they can provide, if they are not following the *wenshi yufa*, they simply cannot be followed."[1]

To ensure the quality of the *Classics*

Since Han dynasty, the sacred texts have undergone a long history of being studied and edited. By Wang's time, the standardization of *Classics* was by and large finalized by means of publication of sanctioned versions. However, former scholars' editorial work and the practice of combining different schools' versions into one standard

[1] Wang, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

text have inevitably left traces in the Classics in the form of distorted paragraphs, deformed characters, interjection of words and phrases. The traditional edition does not contain punctuation; this made the text more vulnerable to editorial errors and liberal readings. Disputations raised by these kinds of errors will never disappear in the history of the commentarial project. Under such situations, to overcome the difficulties and to achieve a high quality text, Wang tried to set up some rules according to which he can restore the texts, or to point out that certain parts are unauthentic and unintelligible.

A common phenomenon is duplication and redundancy, whereby materials from different resources addressing the same issues were consolidated into one piece. Redundancy and duplication were not rare. For example, in reading one section in *Book of Rites*, there are some paragraphs telling the story of King Wen of Zhou, King Wu and the Duke of Zhou,[1] parts of which seem to have resulted from a combination of different sources with similar contents and this resulted in some redundancy. Traditional commentators like Zheng Xuan tried to reconcile the redundant texts with the main narrative, but Wang, by examining the *wenshi* of the main part, held that these were merely nonsensical duplicates which could not possibly contribute to the text. Hence Zheng's efforts to make them meaningful were hardly rewarded.[2] Another example of redundancy is found in *The Analects* Book 5:10, [3]

> Zai Yu was in bed in the daytime. The Master said, 'A piece of rotten wood cannot be carved, nor can a wall of dried dung be trowelled. As far as Yu is concerned, what is the use of condemning him?' The Master added, 'I used to take trust in a man's deeds after having listened to his words. Now having listened to a

[1] Ibid, p. 19, 20. Li Xueqin (ed.), *Shisanjing zhushu, Li Ji zhengyi* (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1999), p. 623.
[2] Wang, *op. cit.*, p. 19, 20.
[3] Zhu Xi (ed.), *Sishu zhangju jizhu*, p. 78, English translation: Lau (tr.), *The Analects*, p. 77, with modification on names.

man's words I go on to observe his deeds. It was on account of Yu that I have changed in this respect.'

宰予晝寢，子曰："朽木不可雕也，糞土之牆不可杇也，于予與何誅！"子曰："始吾于人也，聽其言而信其行；今吾于人也，聽其言而觀其行。于予與改是。"

Hu Yin believed that the second "The Master added" (子曰) was placed there by mistake. If it was not the result of a mistake, then there should be two verses uttered in two different occasions but incidentally ended up together. [1] Wang by reading with his grammatical instinct asserted that this was indeed one verse, and the second "The Master said" was redundant.[2] Wang even ventured to the extent of challenging that this verse was not Confucius', because "to take trust in a man's deeds after having listened to his words" lacks sagely judgment and doing so contradicted with Confucius' teachings and practices to other disciples like Zigong and Yan Hui, to whom Confucius would give evaluation after careful observations.[3] Wang argued that Confucius would not be as naïve as recorded in the verse that he would "take trust in a man's deeds after having listened to his words".[4]

Sometimes a linguistic approach may not be fruitful in reading a complicated text. When Wang had no way of making sense of a text from its semantic aspects, he admitted that he could not understand the sentence. For example, in reading *Mencius* Book 2A:2,[5]

"You must work at it and never let it out of your mind, you must not forcibly help it grow either.

[1] Zhu Xi (ed.), *Sishu zhangju jizhu*, p. 78.
[2] Wang, *op. cit.*, p. 54,
[3] Zhu Xi (ed.), *Sishu zhangju jizhu*, 79.
[4] Wang, *op. cit.*, p. 55.
[5] Zhu Xi (ed.), *Sishu zhangju jizhu*, p, 232, English translation: Lau (tr.), *Mencius*, p. 33.

“必有是焉而勿正心勿忘勿助長也”

In Zhao Qi’s commentary on *Mencius*, no special attention was given to this apparently peculiar sentence. Zhao Qi explained this sentence by saying that “a man behaving benevolently and righteously will in doing so receive blessing. One should not fast one’s mind on [the blessing] but he should know it. So when doing righteous things, one should not forget there is blessing but also should not forcibly help it grows.”[1] But in Wang’s mind, this section deserves a second thought. He mentions that some put the “*xin*” in the first sentence, while some put it in the second sentence, therefore two readings are possible:

“必有是焉而勿正心，勿忘勿助長也”

“必有是焉而勿正，心勿忘勿助長也”

(The different treatments were also noticed by Zhu Xi; he noticed that Zhao Qi and Cheng Yi suggested the first reading, but “in recent times”, people started to read the second way.[2]) Wang casts doubt on this sentence, even though he was not trying to provide an all-embracing answer catering to everyone’s reading practice. He acutely perceived the problem embedded in the section. Reading the *wenshi*, he noticed that no matter where one put the “*xin*,” the sentences would be difficult to understand. Therefore Wang concluded that this section probably contained an ellipsis or a mistake in its wording, so one should not be hasty to follow any readily available reading suggested by former commentators. [3] Different understandings of this sentence can be seen clearly

[1] Li Xueqin (ed.), *Shisanjing zhushu*, *Mengzi zhushu*, p. 75, 76.
[2] Zhu Xi (ed.), *Sishu zhangju jizhu*, p. 232.
[3] Wang, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

from the difference between Zhu Xi's edition and the English translation, in which D. C. Lau took "正心" as the deformed character "忘".[1]

To check the quality of commentarial works

The raison d'être of a commentary is to clarify, elicit and substantiate the intended meaning of the Classics. By virtue of this, the quality of interpretation is determined by how well it has achieved its goal. Here the problem posed to an interpreter is, in a modern interpreter's words, "how to prove a conjecture about the *intentio operis* [intention of a text]?" [2] The problem after this is how to evaluate an interpretation. Eco suggests that "the only way is to check it [interpretation] upon the text as a coherent whole. […] [A]ny interpretation given of a certain portion of a text can be accepted if it is confirmed by, and must be rejected if it is challenged by, another portion of the same text".[3] Therefore the coherence of the text can prevent readers from making unrestricted and liberal interpretation; sometimes this style of reading Classics was not uncommon in Confucianism context. Wang also attempts to discover the "intention of the text," and gauges the interpretations against the "coherent whole". In Wang's practice, *wenshi yufa* is an indicator of the coherence, and compliance to *wenshi yufa* indicates the interpretation is in accordance with the coherent whole and vice versa. For example, in this verse in *The Analects* Book 1:8,[4]

> The Master said, 'A gentleman who lacks gravity does not inspire awe. A gentleman who studies is unlikely to be inflexible.'
>
> 君子不重則不威，學則不固。

[1] Lau (tr.), *Mencius*, Textual Notes "d".
[2] Umberto Eco, *Interpretation and Overinterpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 65.
[3] Ibid, p. 65.
[4] Zhu Xi (ed.), *Sishu zhangju jizhu*, p. 50, English translation: Lau (tr.), *The Analects*, p. 60.

Kong Anguo read this verse as “if a gentleman is not solemn, he will not inspire awe; if he studies, he will be erudite and not be concealed”.[1] Northern Song Neo-Confucians read this as “if a gentleman is not solemn, he will not inspire awe, and his study will not be well-grounded.” Wang checked the “old interpretation” championed by Kong and “new interpretation” preserved in Zhu’s commentary on how to treat the relationship among “*zhong*” (重), “*wei*” (威) , “*xue*” (學) and “*gu*” (固). Wang believed that from the perspective of *yufa*, the key to judge the dispute between old and new interpretation was figuring out how to determine the semantic relationship between the two clauses “不重則不威，學則不固”. Both the old and new interpretations had its problems.

The key is the conjunctive “*ze*” (則), which means literarily “therefore”, and it appears in both clauses, resulting in a structural and semantic parallelism between them. Consider the particle “*ze*”. The old interpretation read the sentence as “the gentleman is not solemn; therefore he will not inspire awe, he studies, therefore he will not be concealed.” That he cannot inspire awe results from his frivolous attitude, and not being concealed results from his learning. The new interpretation overlooked the parallel arrangement of the two clauses resulted by “*ze*” and shifted the structure to another aspect and read this verse as “if one is not solemn, then he will not inspire awe, and his study will not be well grounded.” This new interpretation reduced the topic of the sentence from “to be not solemn” and “to learn” to “not to be solemn”, and made “his study will not be well ground” a result of “to be not solemn”. This new interpretation perhaps was the result of criticisms posed on the behavior of some literati.[2] So the new interpretation has the implication of being more than a word-for-word commentary but an admonition

[1] Li Xueqin (ed.), *Shisanjing zhushu, Lunyu zhushu*, p. 8.
[2] Cheng Hao, Cheng Yi, *Er Cheng Ji*, p. 105. Cheng Yi’s understanding is exactly the new interpretation. In an epitaph to an elder Yang, Ouyang Xiu recorded a verdict issued by the court to instruct scholars to prevent themselves from vanity but to approach the ancient way, cf. Ouyang Xiu, “Yanggong muzhi”, *Ouyang Xiu quanji*, p. 910.

to scholars as well. Judging by Wang's semantic approach, it is natural that the new interpretation is less appropriate than the old. This example indicates that Wang's approach focuses more on the linguistic aspect, as a counterbalance to the emphasis given to the moral aspect by the Neo-Confucians.

However, at another time, Wang exhibits a strong sense of morality. In his critical essays on *The Analects,* Book 19:11:[1]

> Zi Xia said, 'If one does not overstep the bounds in major matters, it is of no consequence if one is not meticulous in minor matters.'
>
> 子夏曰："大德不逾閑，小德出入可也。"

According to Wang, it means that a common person's (小德) character is not perfect, and it can be sometimes good and sometimes not so good; it does not mean that being not good is acknowledged.[2] Wang cites Zhu Xi's comment[3] and says that Zhu took "*ke*" to mean "it is allowed", this is tantamount to giving allowance for one person's misbehavior, is detrimental to one's self-cultivation and is not a gentleman's teaching. [4]

Liberal readings on *The Analects* include changing the structure of sentences. Some readers attempt to use this strategy to elevate Confucius to an unapproachably immaculate level, for example in *The Analects* Book 5:28,[5]

> The Master said, "In a hamlet of ten households, there are bound to be those who are my equal in doing their best for others and in being trustworthy in what they say, but they are unlikely to be as eager to learn as I am."
>
> 子曰：十室之邑，必有忠信如丘者焉，不如丘之好學也。

[1] Zhu Xi (ed.), *Sishu zhangju jizhu,* p. 190, English translation: Lau (tr.), *The Analects,* p. 154, with modification on name.
[2] Wang, *op. cit.*, p. 91.
[3] Zhu Xi (ed.), *Sishu zhangju jizhu,* p. 190.
[4] Wang, *op. cit.*, p. 91.
[5] Zhu Xi (ed.), *Sishu zhangju jizhu,* p. 83, English translation: Lau (tr.), *The Analects,* p. 80.

The proposition "*yan*" (焉) in the Chinese text means "there is", and can be used as a marker of a rhetorical question if put at the beginning of a sentence. So this verse was read by some as

> The Master said, "In a hamlet of ten families, there are bound to be those who are my equal in doing their best for others and in being trustworthy in what they say, but why are they unlikely to be as eager to learn as I am?"
>
> 子曰："十室之邑，必有忠信如丘者，焉不如丘之好學也?"

This reading thus reduced the sense of "self-boosting" hidden in the original reading, because the sage is supposed to be humble and should be reluctant to disregard the existence of persons who are as keen in learning as Confucius was.

A similar example is in another verse in *The Analects* Book 10:17,[1]

> The stables caught fire. The Master, on returning from court, asked, "Was anyone hurt?" He did not ask about the horses.
>
> 廄焚，子退朝，曰："傷人乎？"不問馬。

But some reader rearranged the verse by including "*bu*" (不, which is synonym of "*fou*" 否, an interrogatory marker) into the preceding sentence, and the restructured verse now reads:

> The stables caught fire. The Master, on returning from court, asked, "Was anyone hurt or not?" He then asked about the horses.
>
> 廄焚，子退朝，曰："傷人乎不？"問馬。

The reason to arrange the sentences so is that some reader believed that the sage is benevolent and he must be full of sympathy to anything, human or animal. Wang was

[1] Zhu Xi (ed.), *Sishu zhangju jizhu*, p. 121, English translation: Lau (tr.), *The Analects*, p. 104.

dissatisfied with the creative reading. Setting aside matters of principle reflected in the commentaries and focusing his criticism on the compliance to grammar, he challenges the reader: "is there anyone in this world who writes in this way or speaks in this way? Is there any grammar that prescribes such kind of sentences?" He then comments: "in regarding interpreting *Classics* and writing commentaries, no matter how profound one's theory is, if his understanding and writing does not follow, or even goes against *wenshi yufa*, one should not follow this kind of interpretation."[1]

That means that the text is the foundation for understanding and philology is the foundation of philosophy. The same principle applies in Su Shi and Zhang Jiucheng's reading on Book 5:24,[2]

> The Master said, "Who said Weisheng Gao was straight? Once when someone begged him for vinegar, he went and begged it off a neighbor to give it to him."
>
> 子曰："孰謂微生高直？或乞醯焉，乞諸其鄰而與之。"

Su read that "Gao is an overly straight person. He begged vinegar for other's request, this is not amount to 'being not straight' suggested by Confucius. What Confucius meant is that Gao was not straight in his daily life. […] Gao did not want to refuse others and had to beg vinegar for the one, this practice cannot be sustained and this unsustanability is what Confucius rejected."[3] Zhang Jiucheng: "being straight means one follows his feeling in doing something. Gao behaved in such a way to satisfy other's request, who would blame him for following his feeling in doing things? The Master was actually praising

[1] Wang, *op. cit.*, p. 59.
[2] Zhu Xi (ed.), *Sishu zhangju jizhu*, p. 82, English translation: Lau (tr.), *The Analects*, p. 80, with modification on name.
[3] Su Shi's reading cannot be found in his extant works. Hu Chuanzhi suggested that this may be in Su's now lost work *Lunyu shuo*, cf. Wang, *op. cit.* footnote 3, p. 58.

him." Wang acknowledges that Su and Zhang's understandings are profound but they do not abide by *wenshi* and hence cannot be satisfactory.[1]

Why does Wang think these readings are profound but are not abiding by *wenshi*? This is because Wang openly states that "the master considered Weisheng one not being straight."[2] Zhu Xi's understanding was that Weisheng Gao's wanted to do a favor by any means in order to satisfy the one begging for vinegar, but Wang believed Weisheng did the favor in order to give himself a good reputation or good fame, hence doing so was artificial and not genuine. The intention was not straight so Confucius satirized him. This understanding is arrived at solely by relying on the semantics of the ironic interrogation "Who said Weisheng Gao was straight?" However, Su and Zhang ignored the implications of the ironic interrogation and Confucius' criticism conveyed in the ironic interrogation. Su then complicated the case by analyzing, groundlessly, Weisheng's daily conduct and then suggested that doing so was not sustainable and Confucius was actually criticizing this unsustainability. Zhang ventured to re-read the word "straight" into "recklessly doing things" (*zhi qing jing xing*) and then suggested that "not straight" was Confucius' praise to Weisheng. Wang believes that these readings are too profound and far-fetched because these readings are deviate from *wenshi yufa*.

Conclusion

In Song/Jin period, grammar was not a distinctive discipline. It is seemingly peculiar that Wang put so much energy into "nitpicking" grammatical errors, as noted by editors of *Siku quanshu*.[3] An anecdote echoes this: Wang once worked in the Historiography Institute as a Junior Complier. According to Yuan Haowen, the minister

[1] Wang, *op. cit.*, p. 58.
[2] Ibid, p. 58.
[3] Yong Rong, *Siku quanshu zongmu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981), p. 1412.

in charge would always ask the drafters whether the documents they prepared had gone through Wang's editorial work.[1] Obviously Wang's acuteness in linguistic matters was well known to his colleagues.

Wenshi yufa are used more frequently in Wang's work on literary criticism and writings on history, as they concern the proficiency in linguistic expression. For example, in his three *juan* of "*Wen bian*" (critical essays on literature), Wang put much energy into discussing Han Yu. Wang pointed out that Han's many writings had grammatical errors that hindered the flow of language, and excessive description on merrymaking blocking the *wenshi*.[2] At first glance, it was natural to consider *wenshi* in literary criticism, but there seems no theoretical linkage between *wenshi yufa* and Classics and commentaries. Yet, Wang's use of *wenshi yufa* intriguingly shows that these concepts can be useful in understanding the Classics and commentaries. Besides Wang, we can hardly find anyone in the commentarial tradition who uses these concepts so often. Why did Wang exhibit such strong interest in these quite technical concepts?

The first consideration is Wang's attitude of synthesis. Wang did not only synthesize different commentarial works, but also introduced novel methods into existing practice. Comparing with *renqing* and *yi yi ni zhi* discussed in previous chapters, *wenshi yufa* is a distinct concept and it has seldom been noticed in prevailing learning practice. However Wang was not reluctant in implementing this concept in his reading and writing. He was quite well grounded in the commentarial tradition and had noticed the commentarial works accumulated in the past centuries were quite adequate in making the sage's idea clear; however there were still many contentious points in the Classics, which could hardly be reconciled by traditional reading methods. Reflecting on this situation,

[1] Yuan Haowen, "Neihan Wang gong mubiao", *Yuan Haowen quanji*, p. 443.
[2] Wang, *op. cit.*, p. 393, 4.

Wang therefore tried to synthesize this innovative and technical concept into existing reading strategies.

Apart from the objective of synthesis, it is likely that his attention to "*yi yi ni zhi*" helped him in developing his acuteness on philology. Here we shall consider the nature of *wenshi yufa* as general properties of any linguistic expression. Any form of writing must follow *wenshi yufa* in order to be properly understood. A modern philosopher, Wilhelm Dilthey, who also put effort in "sympathetic understanding" noticed the importance of linguistic expression in the process of understanding that an understanding "must focus on linguistic expression, for […] only in language does the inner life of man find its full exhaustive, and objectively understandable expression, thus exegesis is fundamentally rooted in philology."[1] Quite similarly, Zhou Guangqing after examining the implication of "sympathetic understanding" in *Mencius* proposed that understanding the language is the foundation of knowing the intention of the author and the meaning of the text, because "sympathetic understanding" predicates itself on the quality of the text, whose quality must be grammatically and semantically controlled by certain means in order to be interpretable.[2] This is understandable; since an ill-formed text cannot be understood without ambiguity, and interpretation of grammatically flawed text with unfixed errors simply defeats the purpose of understanding. If *yi yi ni zhi* is possible, it is only possible when the text contains understandable content, free of errors by the standard of *wenshi yufa*. In this sense, *wenshi yufa* was introduced for controlling the quality of text to be interpreted, and the evaluation of commentaries is the first selection procedure that sieves out the ill-formed texts so as to prevent further misunderstanding.

[1] Rudolf Makkreel, *Dilthey, philosopher of the human studies* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975), p. 259.
[2] Zhou Guangqing, *op. cit.*, p. 359.

The emphasis on the importance of linguistic rendition for proper understanding can be corroborated by Wang's critical notes on the biographies in *Xin Tang shu* written by Song Qi (宋祁, 998-1061). Wu Fengxia investigated Wang's critical notes on *Xin Tang shu* and pointed out that his 140 entries mainly focus on linguistic expressions and grammatical errors.[1] Wang justifies why he spent so much energy to write these critical notes: he cannot tolerate the grammatical errors and wrongfully deployed narratives to exist in the *Xin Tang shu*. Wang accuses Song that Song would stick at nothing to craft the language to such an extent that "the narrations are tortuous, the words are too archaic to comprehend, the historical facts cannot be illuminated, and the story goes against the truth."[2] In these writings, Wang's focus was again the interplay of proper language and correct understanding.

A comprehensive answer to the question of Wang's interest *wenshi yufa* cannot be arrived at by describing technical aspects like how he defines errors and how he corrects them by applying rules of *wenshi yufa*, but we should take into consideration what kinds of work he was checking. The works he scrutinized can be grouped into three kinds: Confucian Classics, standard histories and literature works by preeminent literati;[3] all were deemed as compulsory reading for a person either for self-cultivation or for civil service examination preparation. These works were part and parcel of a cultural tradition perpetually undergoing development, in which process contributions were from time to time added in, in the form of newly written commentarial works, newly compiled history and innumerable literature works, and criticisms and amendment to these works. It is possible that pointing out errors and making corrections were Wang's intended

[1] Wu Fengxia, "Shili bu qu Song Zijing, Jin dai Wang Ruoxu dui *Xin Tang shu* de piping", Qu Lindong (ed.), *Shixue piping yu shixue wenhua yanjiu* (Harbin: Heilongjiang renmin chubanshe, 2009), p. 161.
[2] Wang, *op. cit.*, p. 232.
[3] E.g. on history, including *Xin wudai shi*, *Xin Tangshu*, *Shi Ji*, cf. Wang, *op. cit.*, p. 412, Ouyang Xiu and Su Shi's literature works, cf. Wang, *op. cit.*, p. 411.

contributions to the ongoing project of refining the cultural tradition and this can be seen from his scholarly endeavors on these works. On literary works, although Wang claimed that Su Shi's literature had reached the highest standard,[1] he was not hesitant in picking out the errors of *wenshi* in Su's writings.[2] On histories, he points out Sima Qian's errors in using prepositions and pronouns in *Shi Ji*, and Song Qi's infamous archaic style and grammatical errors in *Xin Tang Shu*. On commentarial works, Wang highly praised Song scholars' works and claimed that what he needed to do was to pick out the mistakes and make some supplementary notes.[3] By doing so, Wang invested efforts into facilitating learners in understanding the difficult texts and in avoiding similar mistakes. He was consciously accumulating editorial and critical notes for later generations in various disciplines. Although sometimes his writings seemed to be focusing on trivial matters, he was actually contributing to the ongoing commentarial, cultural and literary tradition as an independent scholar living in an adverse social environment from his own perspective.

[1] Wang, *op. cit.*, p. 413.
[2] Ibid, p. 415, 6.
[3] Ibid, p. 33, 55-6.

CONCLUSION

What happened in North China after the retreat of the Song court? Did the vast territory, as some learned minds believed, become derelict and a dessert of civilization? This old rhetoric has lost its credibility. Reassessment of the civilization achieved under this regime reveals that the intellectuals of Jin never lost their energy and aspiration in bringing cultural products and good government to the realm, and they never stopped practicing literary activities for self-enrichment and for the sake of succession of their civilization. The intellectuals also managed to get entrenched in the administrative system and found a "common ground" on using *wen* to run the country with the high sovereign.[1] *Wen* was believed to be superior to *wu*, or military power, because it brought about effective and benevolent government. No ruler could reject *wen*, especially for the Jurchen emperors who had to leverage on civil officials to balance the power of Jurchen military aristocrats.

Wen could not manifest itself automatically; its representatives were the literati. As Bol noticed,[2] *wen* was manifested in a variety of their activities, e.g. literary composition, painting and calligraphy, writing treaties on literary or scholarly topics and so on. As a central figure of Jin literati circle, Wang Ruoxu's approach to *wen* is unique: much of his effort was put in writing critical essays. Through examining Wang's critical essays, this research attempts to answer the question of "How Wang criticized others and engaged himself in the cultural tradition". The discussions in the proceeding chapter provide for revisitation of this question.

[1] cf. Bol, "Seeking common ground: Han literati under Jurchen Rule".
[2] Bol, "Seeking common ground: Han literati under Jurchen Rule", p. 534.

Wang's critical essays are infused with unique concepts and reading methods. In chapter 3, I discussed a central concept in Wang's reading strategy "*renqing*" which was frequently used in his critical essays. This concept helped Wang to participate in the debate over how to understand the Confucian Classics. During the Song-Jin period the research interest on Confucian Classics had shifted to the search for the true intention of the sages and the true way; philology and the art of glossary were no longer the centers of gravity as before. Wang was clear about the trend and he adopted "*renqing*" in order to penetrate into the discourse by challenging pre-Song commentaries and correcting Song annotators' errors in their work. For him, Han and Wei commentators were overly relying on and blindly following their philological tradition and did not want to break through for more meaningful readings. In contrast, the Song scholars made effort in searching for the true meanings, and dwelt on the subtlety and details of the Classics; their discerning minds did produce fruitful commentaries, helping people understand the once ambiguous texts. However, the Song scholars showed some inadequacies - they were overly profound, lofty and generous in appraising Confucius, and hence their commentaries depicted the sage as a god-like immaculate figure with irreproachable character. Song intellectuals' portrayal of Confucius deified him and deprived him from "*renqing*". Wang had to apply the idea of "*renqing*" to redress misreading, to restore the humanity of Confucius and the "historical meanings" of the Classics.

Renqing is a useful concept by virtue of the fact that it is so common and directly involved in our everyday life and can be experienced by every ordinary man. Since everyone has his own allotment of *renqing*, which is quite similar to others, no matter if the other is his peer or a faraway, remote ancient sage, it is possible to use one's own *renqing* to perceive of the ancients' and to decipher his words and deeds by sympathizing with their situation using his own *renqing*. This is the way the Classics

should be read, rather than by verbatim recitation or philological tautology. In this regard, *renqing* is dovetailed with Wang's second reading strategy "sympathetic understanding", or "*yi yi ni zhi*", which was discussed in chapter 4.

Wang revived Mencius's teaching of *yi yi ni zhi* and integrated it in his reading practice to treat distorted texts and erroneous commentaries. Wang's motivation for *Yi yi ni zhi* was mainly compelled by Song scholars' misreading of *Mencius*. Wang demonstrated application of this method in reading *Mencius* and the *Analects*. By illustrating how one could extract the real intention of the ancients through reading the Classics this way, Wang attempted to give readers confidence in themselves so that they could use their own mental capability to understand ancient sages and worthies, to learn from their superior quality and to nurture one's character. This was especially meaningful at a time when self-cultivation under the guidance of Confucian Classics was highly emphasized and practiced.[1]

Yi yi ni zhi is predicated on the belief that the texts of Classics are prima facie reliable records of past words and deeds. However in reality, the texts in the Classics are more often than not misarranged or distorted by one reason or another, therefore not always reliable, and the commentators not only failed to discover the errors but also compounded the mistakes by tortuous explanations to justify the wrong texts. How do we then ensure the quality of text and commentaries? The solution Wang suggested was *wenshi yufa*, as discussed in chapter 5. Wang believed that there were mistakes in the text, and these mistakes can be discovered by checking the syntax of that sentence or the flow of the narration of the context. If a sentence is grammatically unsound, or is out of the flow of the narration, it is highly likely that there is an error, perhaps a deletion,

[1] In 1189, it was ordered that candidates participating civil examination on law should learn the *Analects* and *Mencius* so as to nurture their capability and to know the root of civilization and good government, cf. Tuotuo (ed.) *Jin Shi*, p. 210. In 1205, Royal Guards who were younger than 35 were required to learn *Xiao Jing* and *Analects* to cultivate a spirit of filial piety and integrity, cf. *Jin Shi*, p. 270.

insertion or misplacement. This test applies to commentaries: if the commentary suggests an explanation that renders the text grammatically unsound, the commentary is not reliable. This concept can be used as a quality control mechanism for reading ancient Classics and a standard test for assessing commentaries.

Not all of the three concepts are Wang's inventions, but they are the unique features of Wang's critical essays. The next part of the question is how Wang engaged himself in the cultural tradition, This research concentrated on one aspect of Wang's engagements that is the writing of critical essays. Wang did not write these for the sake of intellectual curiosity but it was the way Wang related his learning to the cultural tradition and to a larger extent, the real world. The problem Wang had to face was how to position him in the cultural tradition and in political system. For the fromer task, it seems that Wang viewed himself as the one to assume the role of evaluating, correcting and synthesizing different schools of learning on the Classics studies of the past centuries. This attitude is especially meaningful for Wang and his contemporaries, because the literati of Southern Song were in a better position to claim the legacy of the Chinese civilization at the expense of the northerners. As Bol proposed, the Jin literati knew the development in intellectual circles in Southern Song. In order to maintain an independent position, they tended to treat "the roots of contemporary Song trends as part of their own tradition".[1] This research also indicates that it is quite often in Wang's critical essays that he was more receptive to Northern Song scholars' thoughts, e.g. in his understanding and application of *renqing*.

Because of his judgment and evaluation, some believed that Wang usually saw himself as the judge of old commentators e.g. Zheng Xuan, and it is believed that the reason he did so was to gain authority by toppling the giants. However, as the research

[1] Bol, "Seeking common ground: Han literati under Jurchen Rule", p. 538.

suggests, Wang was not deliberately attempting to overhaul the commentarial tradition; he was trying to synthesize new reading methods in order to understand the Classics and the sage's information in a new and innovative way. In the process of doing this, he could not circumvent the received commentarial tradition; he had no way but to use others' commentaries as a comparable reference to indicate how effective his method could be.

To answer the question that how to position himself in the political system, it is important to relate Wang to his social settings. As a scholar-official Wang's identity had two aspects, as an official in charge of certain administrative duties and as a scholar learning and pursuing intellectual enterprise. Does serving in the administrative hierarchy and learning contradict each other? What is the relationship between learning and serving? In a series of correspondences between Wang and his friends, Wang offered his understanding: In the very first place, learning provides learner knowledge and training; it sets the foundation for winning a chance to pass the exam and hence a position in the administrative system.[1] When serving in the government, learning can ensure that one shall not deviate from the norm since it sets the correct mind of an official.[2] Service in government is necessary; he once persuaded an erstwhile student to work actively in his posting as a magistrate so as to provide good governance to the people, rather than to withdraw from service and leave people with bad government. More than that, intellectual activities can be used to demonstrate how profound one's learning is, and learning is an important component for a competent and principled official. This was a well acknowledged idea at that time, for example in screening candidates for Investigating Censors (監察禦使), the recruiting agency announced that only *jinshi* degree holders were to be short-listed, while clerks would not be considered.[3]

[1] Wang, *op. cit.*, p. 538.
[2] Ibid, p. 532.
[3] Tuotuo (ed.), *Jin shi*, p. 2153.

Engagement in political and administrative work was not merely working for a life, it was also a way of life. The interplay between one's career path and the development of his thought cannot be neglected. By working in various locations like in the boarder counties of Guancheng and Sizhou, and his final posting in the malfunctioning court in Bian, Wang clearly perceived the situation of Jin and was compelled to reflect his and to a larger extent, his social group's position in his time. The effect of these experiences on his perception of intellectual activities, cultural tradition and literati's position needs further investigation.

I hope that my answers to the "How" question have shed some light on our understanding of Wang Ruoxu. Wang is a good case study to supplement the study of "self-consciousness", i.e. the development of a sense of independency and self-consciousness in the intellectuals as a group distinct from other members of society from Song through Qing.[1] It is useful to know Wang's concerns - how he dealt with the intellectual issues and how he leveraged on his reading strategies to negotiate Jin literati's position in an adverse historical setting. The knowledge is necessary to trace the trajectory of "self-consciousness" which was most easily formed and perceived in the presence of rivalry and challenges. Wang's scholarship provides a good example for the study of the "self-consciousness" and other aspects of intellects which has lasted for a millennium and shaped the intellectual history of China.

[1] Bol, "Seeking common ground: Han literati under Jurchen Rule", p. 537, 8.

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APPENDIX

Wang Ruoxu's official postings

Unless otherwise noted, sources are Wang's biography in Tuotuo (ed.) *Jin Shi*, p. 2737. Translations of the titles are according to Charles O. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*.

1197 *Jinshi*, Classics studies (經義進士)

? Office Manager in Luzhou (鄜州錄事)

1209 District Magistrate in Guancheng (管城縣令)

[1]

1213 District Magistrate in Menshan (門山縣令)[2]

? Provisioner in Hanlin Academy (應奉翰林文字)

? Envoy to Xi Xia

? Administrative Clerk in Sizhou (知泗州軍州事)

? Assistant Editorial Director (著作佐郎)

1222 Assistant Prefect in Pingliang (平涼府判官)[3]

? Left Remonstrator (左司谏)

1224-1231 Junior Complier in the Historiography Institute (國史院編修官)[4]

ca 1230 Prefect in Yanzhou (延州刺史)

1232 Auxiliary Academician (直學士)

[1] Wang, "Jinshi Peng Zisheng muzhi", *op. cit*., p. 519.
[2] According to Hu Chuanzhi, Wang was serving as a District Magistrate in Menshan in 1213, see Hu's editorial note in *Hunan yilao ji jiaoshii*, p. 525, note 1.
[3] Wang, "Yangzi Fayan weizhi xu", *op. cit.*, p. 535.
[4] Yuan Haowen, "Neihan Wang gong mu biao", *op. cit*. p. 443.